Sociology Department Self-Assessment Report
Wittenberg University

August 2012

Submitted to Committee on the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and Provost Chris Duncan
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Keith Doubt
May 2012

**Introduction**

This assessment report addresses how the Sociology Department meets the educational goals of the Sociology Department as well as the institution of Wittenberg University. The report reviews the educational goals of the Sociology Department and Wittenberg University, describes each instrument that is used in the assessment process, and then reports the results of its investigation.

One instrument with which the Sociology Department assesses the degree to which it is meeting its education goals as a Sociology Department is with the results from the national ETS Sociology Major Field Test. The ETS Major Field test provides assessment indicators for various aspects of the field of sociology such as theory, methods, deviance, gender, and multi-culturalism.

A second instrument with which the Sociology Department assesses itself is through focus group reports conducted by faculty outside the Sociology Department after Senior Thesis Presentations. Reports are prepared and shared with the Sociology Department after grades for Senior Thesis are submitted.

A third instrument through which the Sociology Department assesses itself is the senior thesis capstone experience. The faculty evaluates presentations in terms of the Sociology Department's learning goals (which are shared with senior thesis students at the beginning of year and throughout their major career) and the institution's foundational learning goals, namely, computing, diversity, research, and speaking. The Sociology Department also notes trends in students' research in relation to the field, the general strengths and weaknesses of students' work, and ways to improve the capstone course and curriculum in light of thesis presentations.
With these multiple instruments for assessment, the degree to which the Sociology Department is meeting its goals can be more clearly determined and critically measured. The Sociology Department thus takes advantage of a national standardized testing tool with which Wittenberg sociology majors are compared with a large data set as well as a rich, context-based approach to assessing student learning. Both the quantitative and the quantitative data are equally important to helping determine how well the Sociology Department is providing a viable undergraduate sociology major at a quality liberal arts university.

In May 2003 Catherine White Berheide, a sociology department reviewer from the American Sociological Association and expert on assessing sociology programs in small liberal arts colleges, conducted an extensive review of the Sociology Department. This external review was included in the Sociology Department’s assessment report in 2004 and is not included with this report. The purpose of the external review in 2003 was to weight the merits of the Sociology Department’s request for a second anthropology line in order to create a Cultural Anthropology Minor along with its Sociology Minor and Sociology Major and to invigorate anthropological course offerings in the area of globalization and multiculturalism. EPC table the Sociology Department’s request for a Cultural Anthropology minor after a ten month review.

May 2008 Professors McEvoy and Broh suddenly resigned their tenure-track positions. Their tenure lines were left vacant for four years. Spring 2009 Professor Smith ended his three-year phased retirement. His tenure line was filled Fall 2011 when we hired Professor Nona Moskowitz into the joint position that Professor Smith held with East Asian Studies. The past four years there have been several semesters when fifty percent of the Sociology Department’s course offerings were taught by adjunct or visiting faculty. This year the Sociology Department hired Professor Brooke Wagner, whose specialties are criminology, research methods, and gender to start Fall 2012.

During this assessment period Professor Keith Doubt applied for and received two grants from the Fulbright Scholar in Residence Program to bring and support three international scholars to teach cultural anthropology courses full-time at Wittenberg University. These scholars were Professor Mapetla from Lesotho, Professor Vodopivic from Slovenia, and Professor DeWet from South Africa. The grants, which paid the salaries, benefits, and airline travel of the Fulbright scholars, reduced the number of adjunct faculty needed to be hired the past four years.

Spring 2012 the Sociology Department graduated twenty-four sociology majors with three full-time faculty, one being a joint position with responsibilities to East Asian Studies. While one expects a strong, positive correlation between the number of graduating majors in a department and the number of regular faculty in a department, this was not the case for the Sociology Department at Wittenberg University.
This report shows how the Sociology Department nevertheless continues to provide a viable sociology curriculum, essential support to the General Education program, critical courses to several interdisciplinary and international programs, important faculty service to the Wittenberg community, significant scholarship in the academic community, and invaluable service to the broader community, both local and global.

**Wittenberg Sociology Department Mission**

Uniting sociological and anthropological perspectives, the students and faculty of the Sociology Department of Sociology join in exploring human society and culture. Course offerings and co-curricular activities address a full range of issues in both the applied and the more academic areas of the disciplines. The Sociology Department is unique in its international and inter-disciplinary emphases. (Found on the Sociology Department Web Page at http://www4.wittenberg.edu/academics/soci/)

The Sociology Department of sociology is comprised of professional sociologists and anthropologists dedicated to representing these two disciplines in the Wittenberg community. The facilities and resources of the Sociology Department are to be used in the pursuit of this task. Our primary tasks are those of instruction in our specialties, with the preservation, creation and dissemination of knowledge in our areas of expertise linked to instruction and consonant with it.

Anthropology and sociology are the most general social sciences, both devoted to the analysis of society and culture as complex human phenomena. While the first goal of scholarship is understanding, our pursuit of knowledge is also guided by the need to address human problems and assist in the formulation and implementation of intentional policy to meet socio-cultural goals. Each faculty member is involved in research activities with the aim of discovery and preservation of knowledge about society and culture. In the most general sense, as teachers, we seek to induct students into this quest. At minimum, we seek to provide students with the basis upon which they will be able to evaluate publicly relevant social scientific scholarship, such as that which is used in policy development or planning. (Found on the Sociology Department Web Page at http://www4.wittenberg.edu/academics/soci/general/mission.html)

**Assessment of Wittenberg Sociology Department’s Mission Statement**

One way in which the Sociology Department demonstrates its commitment to its Mission Statement is through the wide range of sociology and anthropology courses it offers at Wittenberg University. These courses support not only the Sociology Department’s curriculum for its majors and minors, but also, as importantly, the Wittenberg University
in institutional educational goals. These goals, as stated in the Wittenberg Strategic Plan, is to provide quality interdisciplinary courses, rich courses that support area studies programs, and up-to-date courses with an international perspective.

**Sociology Department Courses that contributed to General Education Requirements, 2008-2012**

Objective 1 of Goal A in the Strategic Plan for Wittenberg University states: *Renew the liberal arts core (as expressed in the general education requirements) to ensure it is current to the world in which we live, reflects the priorities of the strategic plan, and reinforces the connection between all majors and “the core.”* Below is a listing and numbering of Sociology Department Courses that contribute to Wittenberg University’s General Education Requirements the past two years. The listing is typical of the support that the Sociology Department provides the Wittenberg General Education Program with respect to meeting the institutional goals of Wittenberg University.

S Learning Goal
1. SOCI 101 Introduction to Sociology
2. SOCI 110 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
3. SOCI 210 Sociology of Family
4. SOCI 290 Global Change
5. SOCI 376 Law and Society
6. SOCI 250 Deviance
7. SOCI 270. Sociology of Minority Groups
8. SOCI 280 Animals and Society
9. SOCI 350 Race and Ethnicity
10. SOCI 380 Identity, Self, and Society

C Learning Goal
1. SOCI 110 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
2. SOCI 201 Anthropology in Eastern Europe
3. SOCI 201 Anime and Youth Culture in Japan (Moskowitz)
4. SOCI 201 Love, Gender, Sexual Network (Hammer)
5. SOCI 245 Gender and Society
6. SOCI 277 Islam and Islamic Societies
7. SOCI 301 War, Identity and Justice: Lessons from Bosnia
8. SOCI 390 Russian and Central Eurasian Societies

R Learning Goal
1. SOCI 277 Islam and Islamic Societies, One Section (1)
2. SOCI 301 Sociology of Religion

M Learning Goal
1. SOCI 307 Research Methods (1)
Writing Intensive Courses Offered within the Sociology Department

Approximately twenty-five percent of the Sociology Department’s course offerings each semester are Writing Intensive. This demonstrates another way in which the Sociology Department contributes to Wittenberg University’s General Education Requirements and its Strategic Plan for providing a strong liberal arts education to its students.

Service Learning Courses Offered within the Sociology Department

Objective Three of Goal A of the Strategic Plan states: *Supplement the liberal arts core with experiential learning opportunities for all students and . . . expand service-learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom.*

Whenever possible, the Sociology Department offers service learning courses and thus contributes to the primary interests articulated in Wittenberg University’s General Education Requirements and its Strategic Plan. Recent Service Learning Courses offered by the Sociology Department:

1. SOCI 307 (Spring 2012), Research Methods
2. SOCI 380 Identity, Self, and Society

Courses for Area Studies and Interdisciplinary Programs Offered within the Sociology Department

The Sociology Department provides a wide range of course offerings that directly support Objective 1 of Goal A of the Wittenberg Strategic Plan, which states:

- Encourage integrated learning experiences with interdisciplinary work teams.
- Review current Sociology Departmental structures and processes to encourage integrated and cross-disciplinary thinking and
- Facilitate the development of interdisciplinary majors.
- Provide curricular flexibility to encourage multi- and interdisciplinary exploration.

Women Studies Courses

1. SOCI 201 Gender and AIDS in Global Context (Mapetla, Fulbright Scholar)
2. SOCI 201 Love, Gender, Sexual Network (Hammer)
3. SOCI 236 Gender and Society
4. SOCI 210 Sociology of Family

Africana and Diapora Studies

1. SOCI 201 Gender and AIDS in Global Context (Mapetla, Fulbright Scholar)
2. SOCI 201 Gender and Urbanization in South Africa. (Mapetla)
3. SOCI 277 Islam and Islamic Societies
4. SOCI 301 African American Social Thought
5. SOCI 430 Race and Ethnicity

**Global Studies (2 Courses)**
1. SOCI 290 Global Change
2. SOCI 201 War, Identity, and Justice: Lessons from Bosnia

**East Asian Studies**
1. SOCI 101 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (Hammer, 2009-2010)
2. SOCI 201 East Asian Anthropology (Hammer)
3. SOCI 201 Anime and Youth Culture in Japan (Moskowitz)
4. SOCI 245 Gender and Society (Moskowitz)
5. SOCI 301 East Asian Medical Systems (Smith)

**Russian and Central Eurasian Area Studies**
1. SOCI 201 East European Anthropology (Vodopivec, Fulbright Scholar)
2. SOCI 390 Russian and Central Eurasian Societies

**Urban Studies**
1. SOCI 301 Urban Worlds: India, Brazil, and South Africa (de Wet)

**Health Science Minor**
1. SOCI 301 Health and Illness: Biocultural Perspectives (de Wet)

**Honors Program**
1. War, Identity and Justice: Lessons from Bosnia (Doubt)
2. Animals and Society (Nibert)

**WittSems**
1. Violence and Society (McEvoy)
2. What is Friendship? (Doubt)

**Major and Minor Enrollments**

Besides substantially supporting Wittenberg’s general institutional goals as a quality liberal arts university, the Sociology Department is committed as well to providing a meaningful curriculum for an undergraduate sociology major or minor. The table below provides the number of sociology majors and minors that the Sociology Department has graduated the past five years. Keep in mind the unexpected resignations of two charismatic professors, Alan McEvoy and Beckett Broh, in May 2008. Their tenure track lines were left vacant for four years. Moreover, spring 2009 Professor Smith concluded his three-year phased retirement. Fall 2011 Professor Moskowitz jointed the Sociology Department to fill the joint position vacated by Professor Smith.
Graduates with a Sociology Major

Graduates with a Sociology Minor

Sociology Department Learning Goals for the Major

I. Sociological Imagination
Students should acquire a sociological perspective on the interconnection between social structures and the life experiences of individuals; students should be able to understand how sociological and anthropological insights can be utilized to analyze and address major social issues.

II. Traditions of Social Thought
Level 1: Students should become acquainted with broad traditions of social thought so as to gain an understanding of the sociological/anthropological perspective as a way to examine and study human society and culture.
Level 2: Students should learn to apply these traditions in order to analyze sociocultural phenomena and to formulate theoretically significant research questions; students should develop the skills to critically evaluate these traditions of social thought, including their respective strengths, weaknesses and limitations.
III. Research Methodology
Level 1: Students should learn to use others' research in their own enquiries about sociocultural phenomena.
Level 2: Students should develop a methodologically critical attitude towards the research enterprise and towards assertions of relationships between sociocultural phenomena, so that they can critically evaluate others' research.
Level 3: Students should develop the research skills necessary to design and conduct their own research, with an awareness of how decisions of design may affect the outcome, as well as be able to summarize and analyze the results of their own research and to communicate their conclusions in a professionally acceptable way.

IV. Substantive Areas of the Discipline
Students should gain an understanding of the major findings in particular substantive areas of sociology/anthropology.

V. Social Diversity
Students should gain an appreciation for and an understanding of social diversity in contemporary culture, including both diversity between and within various cultural traditions and specifically in terms of socially defined categories such as class, race, and gender.

VI. Career Opportunities
Students should become familiar with the opportunities for graduate study in areas related to Sociology and Anthropology as well as with the various options available for careers for students with a background in sociology and anthropology.

(Found on the Sociology Department Web Page at http://www4.wittenberg.edu/academics/soci/general/learning_goals.html)

Assessment of Sociology Department Learning Goals

1. Sociology Major Field Test (ETS)

Administration of the Test

Spring 2004, five honors students took the Sociology Major Field Test for sociology seniors. The reasoning was that through such testing the Sociology Department could see clearly the strengths and weaknesses of its curriculum because the Sociology Department's best students would be taking the two-hour exam. In Spring 2004 the students had a GPA above 3.5 in their major as well as in their overall curriculum.
Spring 2008 five sociology majors, who were not honors students, again took the sociology major field test for sociology seniors. This time only two students reported having a GPA above 3.5 in their major and only one within the university. Thus, these test scores from 2004 and 2008 are not truly comparable; nevertheless, they are revealing and informative in interesting ways. The 2008 sample is more representative of the average but typical sociology major. The 2004 sample set a high but achievable benchmark for the Sociology Department.

Spring 2012, following the above pattern, five sociology majors with high GPAs in the major took the sociology field test for sociology seniors. Following ETS procedures, Administrative Assistant Peggy Hanna timed and monitored the tests. It is necessary for at least five students to take the test in order to attain group data for the assessment indicators provided in the data reporting. Only the Sociology Department's group mean scores rather than individual scores are reported.

2. Senior Focus Group Reports

To have the advantage of direct student input in the Sociology Department's self-assessment process, the Sociology Department arranges focus groups with senior sociology majors. Focus groups are conducted immediately after senior thesis presentations. No sociology faculty are present. Reports are prepared and shared with the Sociology Department after grades for Senior Thesis are submitted. During the past three years, Professors Suzanne Smailes, Michale Mattison, and Jacqueline Bargdahl (Wright State University) have conducted group interviews and prepared reports for the Sociology Department. After sharing their reports, the focus group leader has discussions with the Sociology Department chair as a follow-up to the report.

3. Senior Thesis/Capstone Experience

As part of the major in Sociology, students are required to complete a senior thesis under the supervision of the "Senior Thesis Professor" and a "Primary Reader" who has a related scholarly interest. The thesis is seen as a capstone experience for majors in that it allows them both to explore research and analytical skills that they have learned earlier and to develop these skills with direct application. In addition, in the process of research and writing, the student develops new skills for the analysis that grow out of the first-hand research tasks. Finally, the thesis process allows the Sociology Department to assess how well it is doing in preparing students for critical and creative thinking, and for professional or allied careers using their major.

The topic of thesis research is chosen in consultation between the student and the faculty. Hands-on empirical research is encouraged, sometimes using available data sets -- including those developed through the surveys carried out in the Research Methods
course in the Sociology Department -- and sometimes requiring the full initiation and carrying out of data gathering in the form of a survey, participant observation project, content analysis, or other research method.

Senior theses are completed largely during the fall semester of the sociology student’s last year at Wittenberg. However, revision tasks normally run into the spring semester, and a presentation of the research paper in a student conference format is carried out in the middle of spring semester. The Senior Thesis Presentation is one of the programs in the Sociology Departmental colloquia series, so an audience made up of students, faculty and local guests has an opportunity to hear about the studies carried out by the senior majors.

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

1. Sociology Major Field Test (ETS) (Comparative Results from 2004, 2008, and 2012)

Description of Sociology Major Field Test
The Major Field Test in Sociology consists of 140 multiple-choice questions, some of which are grouped in sets and based on such materials as diagrams, graphs, and statistical data. Most of the questions require knowledge of specific sociological information, but the test also draws upon the student's ability to analyze sociological data, theories, and relationships, deductively and inductively.

Background and Development
Scores on these tests provide useful information for institutions seeking outcomes measures, for Sociology Departments in evaluating their curriculum, and for faculty in measuring the progress of their students and considering curriculum changes. The major Field Tests provide reliable data for individual and group measurement at the undergraduate level by assessing student learning in major fields of study.

By obtaining data on the performance of groups of students (Sociology majors at an institution, for example), it is possible to report group scores on the reduced number of test questions that constitute the assessment indicators. A minimum of five students is required for any test in order for assessment indicators to be reported. The assessment indicator approach to academic outcomes measurement increase an institution's ability to examine the performance of groups of students on various elements of the curriculum and enables a Sociology Department to disregard results from an area covered by the test but not by the curriculum.

Data from the Sociology Major Field Test in 2004, 2008, and 2012 show that the Wittenberg Sociology Department has some of the best undergraduate sociology majors in the nation and that its students are receiving a strong, excellent undergraduate sociology education within their major.
Note: The Wittenberg group scores and the comparative data guides for 2012 are found in the appendix of this report. The Wittenberg group scores and the comparative data guides for 2008 and 2004 are found in the appendixes of the Sociology Department Self-Assessment Reports for 2008 and 2004.

Comparative Results, 2004, 2008 & 2012

Subscore 1 - Core Sociology (General Theory, Methodology, Statistics)

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).

Subscore 2 - Critical Thinking

- Draw inferences from theories and data
- Recognized unstated assumptions
- Deduce conclusions from information presented in statements or premises.
- Interpret and weigh evidence as to whether asserted conclusions are warranted.
- Evaluate the strengths of comparable arguments regarding a specific issue.
- Apply sociological knowledge to new problems.
- Read and interpret tables of data and graphs
- Recognize the strengths and limitations of both quantitative and qualitative data

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).
**Assessment Indicator #1, General Theory**

General Theory
- Classical and contemporary (including feminist perspectives)
- History of social thought
- Comparison of theories
- Theory construction

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).

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**Assessment Indicator #2, Methodology and Statistics**

Methodology and Statistics
- Quantitative and qualitative methods
- Research design
- Measurement
- Statistics with application to sociology

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).
**Assessment Indicator #3, Deviance and Social Problems**

Deviance and Social Problems
- Criminology/criminal justice
- Juvenile delinquency
- Deviance and Social Control Theory
- Types of deviance (e.g., white collar crime, violence, drug use)

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).

**Assessment Indicator #5, Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism (including race, ethnicity, and religion) (about 11 percent of the questions)
- Prejudice and discrimination
- Racial and ethnic stratification in the United States
- Historical and comparative trends in intergroup relations
- Religious groups and identities

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).
**Assessment Indicator #6, Social Institutions**

Social Institutions (about 9 percent of the questions)

- Economic structure
- Political systems and the law (including war and peace)
- Education
- Health and science
- Religion

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).

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**Assessment Indicator #7, Social Psychology**

Social Psychology

- Personality, culture, and social structure
- Socialization and learning
- Social interaction
- Small groups

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).
Assessment Indicator #8, Gender

Gender

- Feminist/sociological theory, e.g., sex ratios and sex roles, nature vs. nurture controversy.
- Power
- Macro, e.g., social movements, participation in labor force, the glass ceiling, deviant behavior, organizational participation, social mobility, and influence on organized religion.
- Micro, e.g., interpersonal relations, small groups, leadership, role models, socializing agents.

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).

Assessment Indicator #9, Globalization

Globalization (No description provided.)

Percentage below Wittenberg Group Mean Compared with seniors from domestic institutions (n > 150).
Discussion of Results

• The scores show that the Sociology Department’s current curriculum and course offerings, which could be seen to be eclectic in comparison to a traditional undergraduate sociology program, do not, in fact, detract majors from learning the core principles of the discipline; if anything, the Sociology Department's curriculum (perhaps because of the comparative and creative ways in which the subjects are taught) improves students' ability to master core areas.

• The charts compare Wittenberg Sociology Department's group total mean score with the mean score of other institutions. The Sociology Department's mean score is the mean score of five students from a purposive sample of the Department’s better students rather than the entire senior class or a random sample. The results show that for the students in this group (25% of the graduating class) the Sociology Department is doing an excellent job. The scores indicate that the Sociology Department is teaching the principles and concepts of sociology effectively and also that the Sociology Department has some of the best sociology students in the nation.

• After Professor McEvoy, whose specialty was deviance and criminology, retired, his faculty line was left vacant for four years and these courses were taught during the spring semester by a qualified adjunct professor. In this manner, the Sociology Department was able to maintain majors’ competency in this key area.

• In general, in the areas where we have regular faculty teaching--theory, methods, social psychology, deviance, gender, and globalization--the Sociology Department group mean in these assessment indicators is impressively high. There are some assessment indicators where the Sociology Department mean did not score high, e.g., demography/urban/rural/community (not included in this report). The Sociology Department infrequently offers courses in these areas, although an elective course in Population Demography is offered in the Geography Department and crossed listed with the Sociology Department. It is impossible for an inequitably staffed and small Sociology Department to cover all areas in the field of sociology.

2. Focus Group Reports

To have the advantage of direct student input into the Sociology Department's assessment process, the Sociology Department arraigns focus groups by faculty outside the Sociology Department with senior majors. Focus groups are conducted immediately after senior thesis presentations. At this point, students are “high” from their presentations and want to give back to the Sociology Department. They are being evaluated and they now want to evaluate the Sociology Department and the process it went through. No sociology faculty were present. Reports are prepared and shared with the Sociology Department after grades for Senior Thesis are submitted. Professors Suzanne Smailes, Michael Mattison, and Jacqueline Bargdahl (Wright State University) have conducted group
interviews and prepared reports for the Sociology. Below are their reports, listed chronologically.

**Professor Mike Mattison, 2010**

On Wednesday, February 24th, twelve sociology students attended a one-hour focus group, offering their thoughts as to their experiences in the major in general and with the senior thesis project in particular. They were each given a brief questionnaire (attached), and then they engaged in a group discussion.

**Overview**

Students were unanimous in their appreciation for the thesis experience. Granted, they had just presented and were rather euphoric about having completed the process, but they talked about the value such a process had for them. They said that the project gave them a chance to represent their best work and it gave them a sense of pride to have completed it. They appreciated the freedom of choice they had in selecting topics, and they were extremely thankful for the faculty’s interest in the work: they said that it was obvious that the faculty members were excited about the theses.

At the same time, students did wish for more support during the process. They wished for more deadlines for writing assignments and more feedback on their work. A majority of them also thought that a course in statistics should be required for the major.

**Writing Support**

The students overwhelmingly expressed a wish to be held more accountable for writing deadlines. They appreciated that, as seniors, they were expected to be responsible for managing their time, but they wanted the faculty to be “more strict” about the writing process. They felt they “got away with” not turning in sections of the project on time, and they wanted more “concrete goals” for the sections of the thesis. They also thought that the senior thesis course could be better utilized to help them in their writing. They wanted more time in class to talk about model papers and to work with one another on sections of the thesis. There was, for one student, “not the feeling of a class.” (These concerns echo the ones mentioned by Matt Smith in his 2008 report, where some students “expressed a desire for greater personal guidance and requested more of a consistent push from the faculty.”)

Some students also felt that the connection between the Writing Center and the class was not well made. Even though certain advisors in the Center were available to talk about the paper, students did not always meet with those advisors. While one student said the availability of the Center was “excellent,” others wished for more involvement from the Center: e.g. class visits, in-class workshops.

There was also some concern from students about the “uneven” feedback they had from their faculty readers. A few students found the feedback too “general” and one felt that his paper was “trashed.” The students suggested more accountability from faculty in
terms of responding quickly and constructively to the drafts. They also suggested that there be more communication between their primary reader and the instructor of the course. However, students recognize that the department is “stretched thin” and that faculty are “busy as hell” trying to work with everyone. Students wondered if they might be encouraged at times to go outside of the department to find second readers.

Statistics

Though students are not fond of statistics, they do generally believe a course in the subject is valuable for their work: “It’s not fun, but it’s a good idea.” Some strongly disagreed with the idea of dropping the course, believing it would do a disservice to students. And students also thought the course should be taken before Sociology 307 (Research Methods). Part of the concern about dropping the statistics requirement stemmed from the belief that Sociology 307 leaned more towards the qualitative than the quantitative, and students admitted that their research projects were sometimes determined not by what they wanted to study but by the research method they felt most comfortable in using. A few students said that they purposely avoiding statistics in their theses because they were uncomfortable with it.

One recommendation that came from the discussion was to create a two-course system: during a semester there would be two eight-week courses, one focused on qualitative methods and one focused on quantitative methods.

Recruitment

Another topic raised in the conversation was recruitment: how could sociology increase its number of majors. (The topic arose after I asked what recommendations they had for future majors.) The students were concerned about the declining numbers for the department, and they felt as if the department sometimes “waited for kids to find the department instead of the department finding them.” The students wished there could be more advertising for the major, perhaps even in local high schools to inform students of the opportunity that was available for them.

They also suggested that current students find (and be encouraged to find) cross-disciplinary interests. The students wanted others to know how relevant their field was to other fields, and they appreciated the flexibility they had in terms of their courses of study. They believe that current majors should develop an interest early, so they would have an easier time narrowing their topic of study in senior year. They also recommended that students get to know the faculty and develop a working relationship with them; these relationships can then benefit students during their senior projects.

Suggestions

Again, the students found their senior thesis project a worthwhile endeavor. They appreciated the enthusiasm of the faculty and the chance to show others what they had learned. Still, they do believe that the experience could be improved. The suggestions that follow either come directly from the student comments or were prompted by those comments.
• Institute more structure into the senior thesis course. Design a writing calendar for students and then hold them accountable for deadlines; grade the completion of rough drafts or find some way to give them credit for completing work.

• Utilize the class time for structured writing workshops: peer response sessions or discussions of model papers.

• Work with the Writing Center to connect peer advisors more closely with the course. (And I make that suggestion fully willing to cooperate on such an approach.)

• Give students more opportunities to practice their speeches. They do know about the Oral Communication Center, but they suggested that its presence (and value) could be emphasized more. Perhaps students could run through their speeches during course time.

• Keep the statistics course as a requirement, and require/strongly recommend that it be completed prior to Sociology 307.

• Consider ways to give students more exposure to and experience with quantitative methods.

• Encourage students to find primary readers in other departments.

**Conclusion**

There is obviously a delicate balance between allowing students the freedom to work at their own pace and imposing a structured calendar so that they do not feel adrift or unprepared for a project such as the senior thesis. At the moment, for this group of students, the balance is tilted towards too much freedom, and the main question is how to hold them accountable at certain steps along the way. There did seem to be a calendar in place for this past class, so perhaps it is more a matter of assigning credit for drafting rather than designing a new course structure. Coupled with the accountability could be more opportunity for response to writing. The students indicated that they would appreciate more chances to discuss their work with others, either their classmates or with advisors from the Writing Center. If they are required on certain dates to turn in rough drafts, then those days could be used for peer workshops.

Again, the students expressed a lot of enthusiasm for the senior thesis and for the faculty. Their joy at completing their presentations that day was palpable, and it is wonderful to find students so engaged. I hope, then, that this report might contribute to strengthening an already strong capstone experience. If I can answer questions or provide further details, please let me know.
Professor Suzanne Smailes, 2011

On February 23, 2011 I met with ten (all but two) senior Sociology majors from 3:45-4:45 immediately following their thesis presentations. I brought the following questions with me as prompts for the discussion about their assessment of the Sociology program at Wittenberg. I did not ask them in direct order, but tried to use student’s remarks and responses as segues to the questions.

- Does your senior thesis represent your best work at Wittenberg?
- What was most positive about your senior thesis experience?
- What could be improved with the senior thesis experience?
- How can the department improve the writing process that is involved with the senior thesis?
- How did Sociology courses in the major prepare or not prepare you for senior thesis? What aspects of your methods course helped or did not help during the thesis project?
- What are your thoughts requiring statistics for the Sociology major?
- Are issues of race and gender adequately covered by courses offered?
- Currently 50% of all Sociology courses are taught by adjunct/temporary faculty. What is your perspective on this?
- What recommendations would you give to Sociology majors? The faculty?
- Any other thoughts or concerns you would like the Sociology Department to consider?

Many students felt that their senior thesis was their best work at Wittenberg, although a few students did say they wrote it just to “get it done”. The ones who felt it was their best work stated that they planned to use it as a writing sample for graduate school or for work, that they enjoyed working on a topic of their choice and exploring it in depth, and that they received satisfaction in having a good end product. Presentations were nerve-wracking and many students at this point were very tired, but they were very enthusiastic and lively during our discussion. The cake and pizza were greatly appreciated.

I have grouped comments in broad categories – Methods Class and Lack of a Statistics Requirement, Thesis Class and Experience, Presentation, and General Comments and Suggestions for the Sociology Department. Hopefully, they will be useful to the department in their assessment process.

Methods Class and Lack of a Statistics Requirement

- Students suggested that methods class should be taken during the sophomore year, if possible. However, if you are the type of student who forgets too much in a few
years, they suggest taking it in the junior year. Or, take methods sophomore year and a statistical class in the junior year. This will help keep math skills alive.

- Methods class did not talk about how to actually write a thesis. Some students went to other school’s websites for methods information. The ASA book was not enough.

- Quantitative methods did not go far enough – “not enough weapons in our arsenal”. More quantitative instruction would be useful.

- Students felt they learned skills that would be useful post graduation. SPSS and survey monkey were mentioned. One student mentioned that Minitab was “so much better”.

- Not requiring statistics was a “BIG mistake”. Dr. Andrew’s class was very good and accessible to sociology majors. Graduate schools recommend a statistics course, and statistics are important for use in graduate school and for future employment. You have to have some statistics to write your thesis at Wittenberg as well.

**Thesis Class and Experience**

- Many felt they did not receive enough support. They perceived a lack of direction. There was a contradiction between how Dr. Doubt and Dr. Pankhurst wanted things done or the order in which they should be done.

- Others had difficulty scheduling meetings, especially with Dr. Pankhurst. Students recognized that Dr. Pankhurst was called to serve again on the Provost Search Committee. Students felt that at the time Dr. Pankhurst agreed to serve, a new senior thesis coordinator should have been appointed by the department. Some students felt that Dr. Pankhurst was flexible in meeting and that it wasn’t difficult to set up meeting times with him; other students thought it was very difficult to find a meeting time with him.

- Use two professors teaching thesis class and a third as a reader – this would improve availability and not burden one professor who is teaching the course.

- The guideline handed out was not clear in how one actually does the things listed. For example, it states “thesis section due” or “method section due”- but, what exactly is that? What should be included? What is the expectation on the length of the section?
• Along those lines, students were unclear about the second reader process. Was the student expected to contact the faculty reader, or did the faculty reader contact the student? Many student felt Dr. Hammar would have been a good second reader, but they did not know him or know who he was until too late. Student felt communication could have been better between the 2nd reader and the advisors.

• When the thesis class met, students would sit in class while individual students met one on one with Dr. Pankhurst. This was seen as a waste of time – students felt they should just sign up for individual meetings instead of sitting and waiting their turn. One student drove quite some distance and would have rather signed up at a different time for a one-on-one meeting than during the class time (on a day s/he had other classes on campus).

• If students took Methods a few years before taking the Thesis class, they felt they need a review of methods in thesis. Many found the gap between Methods and Thesis too great. They suggested a “survival packet” similar to what they found on other school’s websites on the process of writing a thesis.

• Drafts were problematic. Drafts were handed in, but not returned or returned to late to be useful. Some students did not know that they were expected to make an appointment to get their drafts back.

• Some students commented that they had to work with a professor they did not know, and that it was a very positive experience.

• “Zero communication” after Winter Break; no timelines…and suddenly “Paper is due next week”.

• Students felt they were more successful when they “stayed on top of their research and on top of their readers”. Students emphasized that they needed to initiate contact with readers and follow up with them.

• Students expressed new knowledge and expertise on their subjects. They felt capable of answering questions and felt prepared for their fields.

• One student stated they got an internship at Wright-Patterson because of their thesis. They felt they made valuable contacts for future work and references there.

• Another student enjoyed interviewing other people, especially an author of a book they were currently reading. They had the opportunity to learn on their own what the author was like, and were able to discuss the book with the author.
• One student enjoyed making a survey on their own. The professors checked it, and then they did it. They liked being pro-active, especially compared to their first year when they felt particularly passive/directed.

• Others felt confident about applying for graduate school. The thesis gave them talking points for their application, and an ability to say that they actually did something.

Presentations

• Many wanted a guideline on how their presentation was to be graded. They received a copy on the day of their presentations (on their way in?), which by that time was no help at all. Also, it was unclear about who was grading their presentation. The entire department? Dr. Doubt? Dr. Pankhurst?

• Where was the departmental faculty for the senior thesis presentations? Was Dr. Norris not invited? (Students really liked Dr. Norris and thought s/he was a great resource.) Where was Dr. Nibert? Dr. Rav? Where were all the students? Last year it was a packed room; this year only about 15 people. Students who are going to be presenting next year should be required to attend.

General Comments and Suggestions for the Sociology Department.

• Students strongly felt that the Sociology department is understaffed. Students pointed out that there were about 30 Sociology students who will be working on their papers next year. “If we had trouble, then…”

• Do a mini research paper instead of a thesis proposal for a final project. This will jumpstart the process, and students would learn the process.

• More service-learning classes (a big group “Yes!!”). The Identity, Self and Society class was a great class – a growing experience and a hands on experience. Students stated that there is a lot going on in Springfield, most classes could figure out how to integrate a service-learning class into the curriculum.

• An internship class for one semester should be required, especially for sociology majors.

• Students appreciated the size of classes – “small enough to do cool stuff” and felt the classes attracted majors.

• There should be a Sociology Department student journal similar to other departmental journals on campus
• “No matter what, we felt the professors were on our side.” Dr. Rav was especially appreciated, as they were available at night.

• Have more gender classes offered for Sociology majors.

• Offer a wider variety of 300 level classes (currently there are only two?) There are lots of 200 level classes, but not enough 300 level ones.

My overall impression from the students was that while there was some frustration this year in the thesis process, their overall capstone experience in the Sociology department was positive. They expressed appreciation for the excellent faculty and adjunct instructors in the Sociology department. They saw the successful completion of the capstone experience as an affirmation that they were indeed “real sociologists”.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Smailes, Assoc. Professor
Head of Technical Services
Wittenberg University Thomas Library

Professor Jacqueline Bergdahl, 2012

I conducted a four question Likert-scale self-administered survey with the group of 23 students before proceeding with the focus group.

**I believe it is a good idea to add statistics as a requirement for the major.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
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Students disagreed on this topic primarily because of different experiences that they had had with different instructors in different disciplines offering statistics courses. Less than half had a negative experience and the majority reported a positive experience. I believe that some students would have a negative opinion of statistics no matter who taught the class or how the course was organized, but they were a minority. Many students expressed the desire to have both methods and statistics taught in the Sociology department to improve the experience.

**I believe I was well supported in my writing efforts for senior thesis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
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</table>

Students were mixed in their response to this question. The majority had had a positive experience (77.8%), but one student was unhappy with their senior thesis and felt more support might have helped. Those that were neutral had complaints that they got conflicting advice from different readers, but I assured them that was a normal part of the process. Some felt that their readers did not really understand their thesis subject and could not offer good guidance.

**I believe the thesis experience was a valuable one overall.**
All students thought their thesis experience was valuable.

**I believe the thesis experience helped prepare me for life after graduation.**

The majority of seniors agreed that the thesis experience was one they would carry forward in life (65.2%). Only one student strongly disagreed with this statement, in my opinion, likely based on their poor outcome. The neutral respondents were those students who didn’t believe that they would be going onto occupations where the types of skills learned in the thesis process would be used. I disagreed with them, pointing out that they had become intimately acquainted with the process by which much of our knowledge in society is created.

**What was the most positive aspect of your senior thesis experience?**

Most of the comments were about how much they liked the structure that was imposed on the senior thesis experience. They mentioned specifically liking deadlines and being pushed not to procrastinate, have the entire semester to work on it and a break before getting comments and doing the presentation. One student gave choosing their own topic as a positive aspect. Students were also pleased by having multiple readers and the peer editing process. Dr. Doubt was commended for making good connections for students and helping them shape theses.

**What could be improved with the senior thesis experience?**

Students expressed frustration with statistical analysis. Dr. Doubt was criticized for not being clear enough in his instruction on this aspect of the thesis. Students recommended more education about statistics and SPSS for the instructor and better time management for meeting with students on their individual projects. Students complained they made appointments and still did not get to meet with Dr. Doubt because he was still working with earlier appointments.

There was a lot of discussion about presentations specifically. Posters instead of presentations were mentioned as an option and there was some support for this among students. One student suggested a process more like the oral examinations that Political Science does, but many students expressed displeasure at this idea. Students complained about having to miss classes for the presentations. They suggested practicing the presentations. Many were enthusiastic about having an opportunity for feedback and revision prior to presentation on their materials, although some students felt that since there was plenty of time to prepare the presentation, that help could be sought elsewhere. (Comment: I think the students who did well presenting were on the side of no additional help needed while those who did not do well, felt the need for more assistance.)

There was a lot of agreement about changing the seating arrangements for the presentations. They found sitting on the stage for 1.5 hours tiring and could not see the presentations of their peers while on the stage without craning their necks.
How can the department improve the writing process that is involved with the senior thesis?

Students enjoyed all the feedback, but would change the format of that feedback. They would prefer feedback given by the track changes function in Word rather than the current system which was clunky. (I apologize. I was not clear on what their complaint was. It seemed to have something to do with the email system.) Students felt like they got too much general feedback and not enough specific feedback from their readers. In addition, they complained about conflicting feedback. (I told them this was a normal part of peer review.) One student suggested a research manual like the one the Communications department provides to students – it apparently provides examples of how to cite different materials, amongst other things.

Additional suggestions for improving the process included recommending a sociology methods course over other social science methods courses. More emphasis on the literature review as it was the most challenging part of the writing process was also recommended. Examples of senior thesis project papers would be welcome as would more exposure to journal articles (as examples of successful research projects).

**How did Sociology courses in the major prepare or not prepare you for senior thesis?**

This did not generate much discussion as students quickly jumped to methods and statistic courses as the basis of a successful senior thesis. Excellent theory courses were mentioned here as being helpful to the thesis.

**What aspects of your methods course helped or did not help during the thesis project?**

Students felt like they needed more methods instruction in general. They felt they needed more practice in methods before going out and trying to do it by themselves - they want practical methodological experience. There were also complaints about busy work from the textbook in the senior thesis class.

**What are your thoughts about requiring statistics for the Sociology major?**

Students recommended requiring statistics. They felt the majors needed it even though they will not like it. It is a necessary part of their education. They recommend taking statistics before methods, not after. They suggested a better SPSS book and the senior thesis class should include a review of SPSS. Many students suggested that methods (and statistics) be taught within the department, but this opinion was not universal. Some students had had good experiences in other methods and statistics courses.

**What recommendations would you give to Sociology majors? The faculty?**

Students recommended that future students select a topic to work on prior to entering the methods class in order to apply what you learn immediately to your topic. Future students were also encouraged to keep all their materials from classes with Drs. Doubt and Pankhurst as it will be useful for the senior thesis.

Regarding recommendations to the faculty, students expressed the desire for readers who were more involved in the process. Most students had a positive experience with their readers, but a few expressed frustration with the lack of engagement. Students would encourage future readers to give more specific help to students through comments instead
of just giving general comments. It was also recommended that the theory, methods and senior thesis classes should be with different professors.

Any other thoughts or concerns you would like the Sociology Department to consider?

One student expressed a desire that fewer sociology classes be offered during the evening hours and more offered during the day, but they understood why that was the case. Students were happy to hear there is a new hire in the department and that person will teach methodology. Students expressed appreciation about the “sociology faculty diversity of ideas” and their level of investment and involvement in the senior thesis experience. Gratitude was expressed for all the hard work of the Sociology Department in giving them their senior thesis experience.

What are your career plans?

Nine students (39%) are going immediately on to graduate school and the rest planned on graduate school in the future, but were going to try and find work first.

- Clarity on what is expected, a rubric earlier . . . during methods. An example of papers, because the examples from the research book in methods were different.
- Actually utilizing the writing center partners. Every time I went I was helped by someone new and different. I never saw my assigned partner even once. The system, which I think was a great idea, sort of just fell through the cracks.

3. Senior Thesis/Capstone Experience

After the senior thesis presentations, the Sociology Department historically meets and discusses the individual senior thesis presentations. The faculty evaluate each presentation in terms of the Sociology Department's learning goals (which are shared with senior thesis students at the beginning of year at the start of senior thesis) and the institution's foundational learning goals, namely, computing, diversity, research, and speaking. Standardized evaluation sheets for both the students' written thesis and the students' oral presentation are filled out, coded, discussed, and stored in the Sociology Department office.

The Sociology Department considers the event as a whole -- noting trends in students' research in relation to developments within the field and the Sociology Department course offerings, the general strengths and weaknesses of students' work, and ways to improve both the capstone course and the curriculum. In this way, senior thesis serves as both an effective capstone experience for the majors and a useful assessment tool for the Sociology Department. This assessment process has become a ritual within the Sociology Department; it has taken place on an annual basis for more than ten years. Senior thesis meets a number of the university’s learning goals such as writing, oral communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and in-depth research.
Senior Thesis Presentations, 2012 & 2011

2012

Thursday, February 16th, 2012
Session 1, 8:45 to 10:15, Social Movements
1. Michael Lambeck, “Xenophobia and Racism in the Beautiful Game”
2. John Davis, “Imagery in Muscle Magazine Leading to Body Dissatisfaction”

Session 2, 10:30 to 12:00, Media and Society
3. Peter D'Arrigo, “Mobile Text Messaging and its Effects on Society’s Interpersonal Relationships”
4. Elizabeth Ballinger, “Fetishizing the Self: A Sociological Look into Self-Objectification in Reality Television”

Session 3, 1:15 to 2:45 PM Social Inequality
1. Declan McBride, “Institutional Racism and Ohio Election Laws”
2. Anna Martin, “Toward an Understanding of the Victims of Domestic Violence”
3. Taylar Pompey, “Political Efficacy after the Obama Election”

Session 4, 3:00 to 4:30 PM, Gender and Society
1. Genevieve Tripp, “Pole Dancing and Female Sexuality: Fighting the Male Gaze”
2. Sarah Metze, “Female Athletic: Road to Empowerment or Self-objectification?”
3. Maggie Stewart, “Why Don’t Men Practice Yoga?”
4. Deborah Vogt, “What is Consent? Sexual Assault on College Campus”

Friday, February 17th
Session 1, 8:45 to 10:15 AM, Ethnographic Research
1. Julie Knapke, “Interstate Exits as Liminal Sites for Sex Trafficking”
3. Edward Skalla, “Leisure Fishing Cultures in Ohio”
Session 2, 10:30 to 12:00 AM, Quantitative Research
2. Alexandra Bickel, “Clark County Juvenile Drug Court: A Sociological Program Evaluation”
4. Tori Amicon, “Describing the Torturer through the Observations of the Tortured: Descriptions of Moral Disengagement”

2011
February 23, 2011, Shouvlin 201
9:00-10:30 a.m.
I. Evaluating Social Services
   1. Julie Campbell  Lifebooks:  Effective Tool in the Adoption and Foster Care Systems or Not?
   2. Sarah Esterkamp  Oesterlen Services for Youth:  Does the SAY-SO Program Really Work?
   3. Alyssa Wolf  The Juvenile Justice System: A Punitive Warehouse or a Rehabilitative Force for Good
   4. Laura Finch  Discussant

10:45-12:15 a.m.
II. Responses to Stress, Prejudice and a Violent Environment
   1. Breanna Stewart  The Non-medical Use of Adderall and Other Prescription Stimulants on College Campuses
   2. Megan Shubitowski  The Oppressive Behavior toward Nonhuman Animals: Gender and Nonhuman Animal Rights
   3. Timothy Sparks  The Mean World Syndrome: Influence of Violent Media
   4. Mary Carlson  Discussant

Questions and Comments from the Audience
1:45-3:15 p.m.

III. Racism, Prejudice and Politics
   1. James Clement  Racism on College Campuses
   2. Ryan Ruef     Islamophobia in the United States: America’s Religious Prejudice Against Muslims
   3. Karl Larew  The Milosevic Regime: Greed, Groupthink and Sycophants
   4. Angie Levingston                Discussant

Selective List of Graduate Activities

• Ali Bickel, Sociology Major, Class of 2012, accepted at the top ranked school for social work, University of Michigan.
• Tori Amico, Sociology Major, Class of 2012, accepted in the master’s program in social work at Case Western.
• Anna Martin, Sociology Major, Class of 2012, accepted in the graduate in counseling at University of Louisville
• Kayla Potter, Sociology Major, Class of 2012, teaching in the JET program in Japan.
• Alyssa A. Wolf, Sociology Major, Class of 2011, attending Thomas M Cooley School of Law.
• Julie K. Campbell, Sociology Major, Class of 2011, doing graduate work at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte in Sociology and Women's Studies.
• Breanne C. Stewart, Sociology Major, Class of 2011, attending graduate program in Sociology at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio where she will focus on qualitative sociology.
• Angie Levingston, Sociology Major, Class of 2011, working on her master's degree in professional counseling at Liberty University Online.
• Jane Hord, Sociology Major, Class of 2009, law school at University of Kentucky
• Emily Elliot, Sociology Major, Class of 2010, Lutheran Volunteer Corps.
• Grace Mooney-Melvin, Sociology Major, Class of 2010, Loyola University, masters in social work
• Sarah Larson, Sociology Major, Class of 2010, Lutheran Volunteer Coorps
• Andrew Steele, Sociology Major, Class of 2010, Young Adult in Global Mission and founder of Bloom Africa
• Tori Vogelgesang, Sociology Major, Class of 2010, Master of Public Administration, North Kentucky University
• Toni Ottomanelli, Sociology Major, Class of 2005, Sociology Instructor, Owens Community College
• Blake Troxel, Sociology Major, Class of 2005, Peace Corps in Vanuatu, two assignments, graduate school at Yale University
Resource Needs

- The Sociology Department had three vacated tenure faculty positions, each in a crucial area, over the course of four years. Deviance (Alan McEvoy’s area of speciality) is the backbone of the field; this subject is to sociology what genetics is to biology. It is the field around which the entire discipline evolves. Methodology as well as race and gender (Beckett Broh’s area of speciality) are equally crucial. Given its senior thesis presentations and student research, the Sociology Department needs a strong methods faculty member. Race and gender are today the two most active and critical places to do sociology. Anthropology (Stephen Smith’s position) is crucial not only to the Sociology Department but also Wittenberg University in light of the Strategic Plan to globalize the curriculum and develop global citizens among our students. Anthropology is also crucial to area programs like East Asian studies, Africana studies, and Russian and Eurasian Area Studies. Sociology has finally made hires to teach in these areas; it needs time and patience to recover from its staffing deficit over a long period of time.

- With respect to human resources, the Sociology Department serves a disproportionate number of students relative to other departments at the university. The faculty feels that it is important for majors to have opportunities to study in seminars and small upper-level classes. At a liberal arts university there is no reason why students in some disciplines have notable advantages over students in other disciplines, especially when both sets plan to attend graduate school and both represent some of the best students in the nation. Moreover, both sets are paying the same college tuition.

- The Sociology Department's students are among the best in the nation and their performance on Sociology Major Field Test could not be better in some core areas of the discipline. In the past, alumni reports indicate that their undergraduate preparation placed them ahead of their peers upon entrance into a graduate program. This is true for programs in sociology, social work, public administration, law, education, and other professional areas. The Senior Thesis, Research Methods, topical courses, and extensive amount of writing they are required to do are among the reasons why their preparation gives them an edge. Clearly, the Sociology Department does an excellent job teaching sociology.

- At the same time, the Sociology Department does an excellent job working compassionately and responsibly with a large number of students who are academically marginal or who are marginalized by academe. The willingness of the Sociology Department to work closely with this “last chance” group of students should set an example for other departments on campus, who tend condescendingly to dump such students on the Sociology Department.
• The Sociology Department teaches as well a large number of courses that meet the General Education requirements established by the university. The Sociology Department is also a key player in interdepartmental programs such as East Asian Studies, Russia and Central Eurasian Studies, Women’s Studies, Africa and Diaspora Studies, Health Sciences Minor, Global Studies, Wittsems, and the Honors Program.

• The Sociology Department, however, is not a service Sociology Department; it provides majors an excellent undergraduate education in sociology, an education that inspires several to pursue graduate school and excel in this context. The external reviewer points out, "I wish to note at the outset that Wittenberg University is very fortunate to have found seven [sic] faculty with such strong records as teacher/scholars. The University should avoid taking these high levels of achievement for granted and continue rewarding faculty in this Sociology Department (and other Sociology Departments) whose contributions reach these standards of excellence because they will be hard to replace."

• With respect to physical resources, the facilities in Carnegie are vastly inferior to the facilities in other educational buildings. When entering either Barbara Deer Kuss Science Center or Hollenbeck Hall, one feels as if one is entering a totally different world. These buildings feel like clubhouses in a country club. When entering Carnegie, one feels the opposite, as if one is entering a decrepit caddy shack. The differences in the facilities impact student attitudes and morale. There is no air conditioning in Carnegie, which makes classrooms and offices uncomfortable, if not unbearable, in early fall and late spring. The chairs in the classrooms are extremely dated and most uncomfortable, especially for larger people and people who are left handed. Carnegie is not assessable for people with physical disabilities, and this could raise legal issues. There are no classrooms for seminars with seminar tables and comfortable chairs as there are several in Kuss, Blair, and Hollenbeck.

Plans for Future Assessment

• The Sociology Department plans to continue to maintain its senior thesis requirement, despite the heavy workload it creates for the Sociology Department and the senior thesis supervisor. Senior thesis is an outstanding capstone experience as well as an excellent assessment tool. Senior thesis presentations, often lasting two days, are tantamount to a Wittenberg sociology conference. It is chance for majors to share their inquiries-- conducted over the course of four or five months -- in a public forum. The conference results in perhaps one the best sociology meetings in the region.

• The Sociology Department has excellent measurements of what it does well and incisive recommendations on how to enhance and revise its curriculum. At this point, the Sociology Department needs to review these results and these recommendations and formally revise its curriculum. In view of the Sociology
Department's recent successful tenure-track searches -- two to replace the positions vacated with the resignations of three professors -- it is crucial for the Sociology Department to discuss these self-assessment findings collectively.

- The Sociology Department plans to continue conducting a focus group for sociology seniors after senior thesis presentations. The timing is ideal because seniors have just completed their research work and oral presentations. The significance of the capstone experience is clearest to seniors at this particular moment. Since sociology faculty are in the process of evaluating seniors after their thesis presentations, it is appropriate that seniors are asked to evaluate the Sociology Department and to reflect upon their career as a sociology major. The focus group, conducted by a faculty members outside the Sociology Department, is an ideal tool for continued Sociology Department self-assessment. Each year, the results were quite informative for the Sociology Department.

- As frequently as possible, the Sociology Department hopes to administer the major field test either to honors students, as it did in 2004, 2008, and 2012 to a purposive sample of majors, or, possibly, to a randomly selected stratified group of majors. At this time, the Sociology Department, unlike departments in the natural sciences, does not have a budget line for these self-assessment expenses; this disparity is disheartening but typical of the prejudice and discriminatory actions of the Wittenberg Provosts toward the Sociology Department. At this time, the Sociology Department cannot afford to administer the major field test every year or even bi-annually given its small budget.

- A goal for the upcoming year is to review as a department the assessment data that has been collected and update the Sociology Department’s curriculum reflecting personnel changes and proposing innovative curriculum changes for the Sociology Department and Wittenberg University. There are two areas where the Sociology Department would like to develop its curriculum.
  1. The Sociology Department would like to resubmit its proposal for a Cultural Anthropology Minor.
  2. The Sociology Department would like to develop a Peace and Justice Center leading to the establishment of a Peace and Justice Minor, encompassing criminal justice and conflict resolution based on a curriculum with an interdisciplinary and international focus.
Appendix

Purpose of Major Field Assessment Tests


Assessing student outcomes in higher education has received increasing emphasis and attention in recent years. Outcomes assessment has been defined in variety of ways, from measuring student progress in general education programs to assessing learning at graduation to evaluating postgraduate activities and trying to relate success in career goals and objectives of a college or university. No matter how broad the definition of outcomes assessment, a key element for most institutions is that it is a way to evaluate student academic achievement and growth.

It was in response to these concerns--specifically, the need voiced by undergraduate institutions for valid, reliable measures of the outcomes of instruction in the disciplines--that Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) Board developed the Major Field Tests.

Background and Development

The Major Field Tests are objective, end-of-program tests in 14 disciplines. Based on the Graduate Record Examinations Subject Tests, they have been shortened to two hours each, made less difficult than the GRE tests, and revised to reflect undergraduate programs and to be appropriate for all seniors majoring in a field, not just those planning graduate study. (Since there is no GRE Subject Test in Business, the Major field Test in Business is based on a complete revision of the Undergraduate Assessment Program Business Test.)

Scores on these tests provide useful information for institutions seeking outcomes measures, for Sociology Departments in evaluating their curriculum, and for faculty in measuring the progress of their students and considering curriculum changes. The major Field Tests provide reliable data for individual and group measurement at the undergraduate level by assessing student learning in major fields of study.

Major Field Tests are available for the following disciplines: biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, education, history, literature in English, mathematics, music theory and history, physics, political science, psychology and sociology.

Test Content

The content specifications for the Major Field Tests reflect the basic knowledge and understanding gained in the undergraduate curriculum. They have been designed to assess the mastery of concepts, principles, and knowledge expected of students at the conclusion of a major in specific subject areas.

In addition to factual knowledge, the tests evaluate students' ability to analyze and solve problems, understand relationships, and interpret material. They contain questions that
call for information as well as questions that require interpretation of graphs, diagrams, and charts based on material related to the field.

**Test Construction**

The Major Field Tests were constructed according to specifications similar to the specifications for the current GRE Subject Tests, which are developed and reviewed by committees of experts in each subject area. ETS test development specialists assembles the Major Field Tests using questions that had been used in GRE Subject Tests and other questions written by subject matter experts. The complete tests and the specifications were then reviewed by selected experts in appropriate subject matter areas both during the development process and before the pilot testing.

The test development process included an extensive review of each test to eliminate language, symbols, or content considered to be potentially offensive, inappropriate for any subgroups of the test-taking population or serving to perpetuate any negative attitudes that may be conveyed to these subgroups.

After the tests were administered during pilot administrations, each test underwent a rigorous statistical analysis to see whether each question yielded the expected result. Such an appraisal sometimes reveals that a question is not satisfactory. A question that proves to be ambiguous or otherwise unsuitable is not used in computing scores. The tests will be reviewed periodically for currency, and they will be revised and updated with the aid of expert consultants, as required.

Statistical properties of each question, such as difficulty level and degree of correlation with the total score, are on record or are computed when new or revised test forms are first administered to help ensure that each question contributed meaningfully to the test results. For each test, the aim is to provide an instrument that measures the subject matter and skills a student is expected to have mastered in the undergraduate program.

**Scores**

Three types of scores are provided for the Major Field Tests:

* **Individually Reliable Total Scores:**

  Each test yields an individually reliable total score for each student. An individually reliable score is one with statistical properties such that decisions about individual students can be made based on the scores. The length of the test and content coverage are factors in determining score reliability. Total scores are reported on a scale of 120-200.

* **Individually Reliable Subscores:**

  Five of the tests, Biology, Economics, History, Music, and Psychology yield individually reliable sub scores for each student (in addition to the total score). Subscores represent achievement in broad areas within the field reflecting students' strengths or weaknesses by area within their major. Subscores are reported on a scale of 20-100.

* **Group-Reliable Scores:**
Known as Assessment Indicators in the Major Field Tests, these scores relate to a subfield within a major field of study (e.g., Methodology and Statistics as a subfield of Sociology). Since only group data are involved, assessment indicators need not meet the more stringent statistical requirements for individually reliable scores. Assessment indicator scores are reported as mean percent correct for the Sociology Department.

By obtaining data on the performance of total groups of students (all Sociology majors at an institution, for example), it is possible to report group scores on the reduced number of test questions that constitute the assessment indicators. A minimum of five students is required for any test in order for assessment indicators to be reported. Assessment indicators are not reported for individual students.

The assessment indicator approach to academic outcomes measurement increase an institution's ability to examine the performance of groups of students on various elements of the curriculum and enables a Sociology Department to disregard results from an area covered by the test but not by the curriculum.

**Description of Sociology Major Field Test**

The Major Field Test in Sociology consists of 140 multiple-choice questions, some of which are grouped in sets and based on such materials as diagrams, graphs, and statistical data. Most of the questions require knowledge of specific sociological information, but the test also draws upon the student's ability to analyze sociological data, theories, and relationships, deductively and inductively.

**Content of the Sociology Major Field Test**

The broad field of sociology encompasses many sub-fields and specialties; the sociology test covers the majors fields included in most undergraduate programs. The distribution of the content areas with some examples of the topics covered is as follows:

1. General Theory (about 11 percent of the questions).
   a. Classical and contemporary (including feminist perspectives)
   b. History of social thought
   c. Comparison of theories
   d. Theory construction
2. Methodology and Statistics (about 15 percent of the questions)
   a. Quantitative and qualitative methods
   b. Research design
   c. Measurement
   d. Statistics with application to sociology
3. Deviance and Social Problems (about 9 percent of the questions)
   a. Criminology/criminal justice
   b. Juvenile delinquency
   c. Deviance and Social Control Theory
   d. Types of deviance (e.g., white collar crime, violence, drug use)
4. Demography (about 4 percent of the questions)
   a. Population structure and dynamics
   b. Population characteristics
   c. Basic demographic methods
   d. Demographic theory
5. Family (about 8 percent of the questions)
   a. Comparative family structure
   b. Family processes through the life cycle
   c. Human sexuality context and change
6. Organizations (about 6 percent of the questions)
   a. Organizational forms and change
   b. Organizations and their environments
   c. Organization theory
   d. Voluntary organizations
7. Multiculturalism (including race, ethnicity, and religion) (about 11 percent of the questions)
   a. Prejudice and discrimination
   b. Racial and ethnic stratification in the United States
   c. Historical and comparative trends in inter-group relations
   d. Religious groups and identities
8. Social Change (about 6 percent of the questions)
   a. Theory and models
   b. Comparative economic and social development
   c. Political change
   d. Social movements
   e. Technology and innovation
9. Social Institutions (about 9 percent of the questions)
   a. Economic structure
   b. Political systems and the law (including war and peace)
   c. Education
   d. Health and science
   e. Religion
10. Social Psychology (about 9 percent of the questions)
    a. Personality, culture, and social structure
    b. Socialization and learning
    c. Social interaction
    d. Small groups
11. Social Stratification (about 7 percent of the questions)
    a. Class, status, and power
    b. Social inequality (including race, gender, and ethnicity)
    c. Stratification theory
    d. Social mobility (including intergenerational and intragenerational, and ascribed and achieved)
12. Urban/Rural/Community (about 5 percent of the questions)
   a. Urban systems/development
   b. Residential patterns and housing (including community identity/disorganization)
   c. Metropolitanization/suburbanization
   d. Human ecology

Critical thinking questions and gender questions are integrated into the entire Sociology Major Field Test. About twenty-five percent of the questions address critical thinking. About 11 percent of the questions are gender related.

13. Critical Thinking (require students to:)
   a. Draw inferences from theories and data
   b. Recognized unstated assumptions
   c. Deduce conclusions from information presented in statements or premises.
   d. Interpret and weigh evidence as to whether asserted conclusions are warranted.
   e. Evaluate the strengths of comparable arguments regarding a specific issue.
   f. Apply sociological knowledge to new problems.
   g. Read and interpret tables of data and graphs.
   h. Recognize the strengths and limitations of both quantitative and qualitative data

14. Gender
   a. Feminist/sociological theory, e.g., sex ratios and sex roles, nature vs. nurture controversy.
   b. Power
   c. Macro, e.g., social movements, participation in labor force, the glass ceiling, deviant behavior, organizational participation, social mobility, and influence on organized religion.
   d. Micro, e.g., interpersonal relations, small groups, leadership, role models, socializing agents.

**Scoring**
Scores on the Major Field Test in Sociology are reported as follows:

**Total Score**
- Reported for each student and summarized for the group.

**Sub-scores**
- Reported for each student and summarized for the group.
  - Core Sociology (General Theory and methodology and statistics)
• Critical Thinking

Assessment Indicators

Reported for the group only. A minimum of five students is required for assessment indicators to be reported.

• General Theory
• Methodology and Statistics
• Deviance and Social Problems
• Demography and Urban/Rural/Community
• Multiculturalism
• Social Institutions
• Social Psychology
• Gender
**Wittenberg Sociology Department ETS Scores (2012)**

The Wittenberg group scores and comparative data guides for 2008 and 2004 are found in the appendixes of the Sociology Department Self-Assessment Reports 2008 and 2004. Below are the group scores and comparative data guides for 2012. The total test score on the page below compares and ranks the scores of five individuals. The group score with the mean and standard deviation is the score used for comparisons with domestic institutions. The group consists of the five sociology majors who have done well in the major.

![Major Field Tests](image)

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Students responding to less than 50% of the questions: 0
Students in frequency distribution: 5
Students tested: 5

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## Major Field Tests

**Departmental Summary of Assessment Indicators**

**Test:** Sociology  
**Form Code:** 4CMF  
**Institution:** Wittenberg University  
**Cohort:** PPT-SOCIOLOGY 76031 ADMIN 3/28/12  
**Closed on:** March 28, 2012

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Students responding to less than 50% of the questions: 0  
Students in frequency distribution: 5  
Students tested: 5

ETS protects the confidentiality of all test data.  
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**Comparative Data Scales for the Sociology Major Field Test (2012)**

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- Number of Institutions: 156
- Mean: 48.3
- Median: 48.0
- Standard Deviation: 48.0
### Major Field Test in Sociology (Form: 4CMF) Institutional Assessment Indicator Mean Score Distributions

Data includes Seniors from Domestic Institutions – August 2006 to June 2011

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Number of institutions: 156
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Median: 46.0 52.0 48.0 50.0 51.5 56.0 42.0 56.0 51.0
Standard Deviation: 11.1 10.9 13.3 9.0 8.9 10.6 8.9 10.5 10.8