**Assessment Plan for Sociology**

**Step1: Department/Program Mission (Any updates due September 15, 2009)**

Anthropology and sociology are distinct fields united by a common interest in understanding human beings and their communities. Albion College's Department of Anthropology & Sociology teaches students to read with comprehension; think analytically, critically, and creatively; and to express themselves effectively. We emphasize a global perspective and pay particular attention to increasing students' knowledge of how race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and social class are socially constructed. The department offers classes that provide majors, minors, and non-majors with the theoretical and methodological tools necessary to understand and analyze the human condition in the past and present. We emphasize the importance of research skills that foster students' intellectual abilities to master the applications of anthropology and sociology to prepare them for graduate school, for employment, and to bring about positive change in the world.

**Step 2: List goals/outcomes (Any updates due September 15, 2009)**

1. **Data Analysis** (quantitative and qualitative): Students should be able to understand the strengths and weaknesses and apply a variety of sociological research methods. Students should also be able to read, understand, and evaluate scholarly work (as published in academic journals and books). Finally, students should be able to develop their own research models.

2. **Application of sociological theory** (classical and contemporary): Students should be able to use sociological theories to develop research projects. Additionally, students should be able to apply sociological theories as they critically evaluate human’s social behavior and institutions.

3. **Diversity/Inequality** (race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, etc.—the social construction of difference and inequality): Students should be able to understand and find meaningful development within a multicultural society. Students should also understand how social categories are socially constructed and negotiated, and oftentimes transformed into patterns of inequality.

4. **Sociological Imagination**—critically examining individuals and institutions (multiple levels of analysis): Students will understand the reciprocal relationship between individual behavior and social structural forces, as well as the individual and societal consequences of social problems. Finally, students should understand sociology’s unique and important lens of the social world.

**Step 3: Identify program components (Any updates due September 15, 2009)**

*Required courses, elective courses,out-of-classroom or other experiences that are designed to achieve each educational objective. NOTE: Every class will not, nor is it expected to,achieve each outcome. The goal is to get an even distribution of experiences that achieve the outcomes.*

Students will be exposed to each of the Sociology major’s four learning goals in our seventeen course offerings. An analysis of the course objectives for our curriculum reveals that each of our learning goals are addressed by thirteen out of seventeen courses, as seen below.

1. Data Analysis: Mandatory courses—Introduction to Sociology (101; Modeling and Analysis), History of Sociological Thought (212), Research Methods (224), Captsone--Social Psychology (336) OR Comparative Families (350). Statistics—Math 109 or 210. Electives—Population and Environment (250), Social Change and Development in Africa (248), Sociology of Sex & Gender (333), Intimate Violence (360), Stratification (370), Jessie’s Gift (402), Senior Paper (408).
2. Application of sociological theory: Introduction to Sociology (101; Modeling and Analysis), History of Sociological Thought (212), Criminology (225), Men & Masculinities (230), Population and Environment (250), Sociology of Sex & Gender (333), Social Psychology (336), Race & Ethnicity (345), Comparative Families (350), Intimate Violence (360), Stratification (370), Jessie’s Gift (402), Senior Paper (408).
3. Diversity/Inequality: Introduction to Sociology (101), Criminology (225), Men & Masculinities (230), Social Change and Development in Africa (248), Population and Environment (250), Sociology of Sex & Gender (333), Race & Ethnicity (345), Comparative Families (350), Intimate Violence (360), Stratification (370), Jessie’s Gift (402), Senior Paper (408).
4. Sociological Imagination: Introduction to Sociology (101), Criminology (225), Men & Masculinities (230), Population and Environment (250), Sociology of Sex & Gender (333), Social Psychology (336), Race & Ethnicity (345), Comparative Families (350), Intimate Violence (360), Stratification (370), Jessie’s Gift (402), Senior Paper (408).

All majors must take A&S 101, 212, 224, Math 109 or 210, and either 336 or 350 (or write an honors thesis). A&S 101 exposes students to all four of our learning goals, while the Math courses and A&S 224 provide a solid foundation for our Data Analysis learning goal. In 101 and 224, students learn multiple research models while conducting their own research (both qualitative and quantitative). A&S 212 focuses on our second learning goal (theory). This course is offered in the Fall, while 224 is offered in the Spring. Students are advised and generally take these courses in sequence, allowing 224 students to fully integrate theory and research. Seniors must take one of the two Capstone seminars, 336 or 350. Our goal for the capstone course is to enable students to demonstrate mastery of these theoretical and methodological skills by requiring them to design and implement sociological research projects. Majors must take at least five more units beyond the three required departmental courses above, and at least three of these must be at the 300 or 400 level, not including internships. As outlined above, students have a wide range of choices for each of our four learning goals.

Data analysis is fulfilled by having students read and analyze scholarly work, create their own research models, and conduct their own research. Beyond their coursework (as detailed above), many students participate in FURSCA and write honors theses based on their original research, both of which involve extensive exposure to this learning goal. The second learning goal, application of sociological theory, is met by the courses listed above requiring students to regularly read and write about classical and contemporary theoretical perspectives. The diversity/inequality learning goal is met via coursework assignments that include service learning projects, original research, course papers, and for some students regional and national internships. Finally, the learning goal of developing a sociological imagination is accomplished through course assignments (including original research), guest speakers, and again, internships and service learning opportunities.

**Step 4: Select methods/data sources and instruments (Any updates due September 15, 2009)**

*...that you will use to gather information about whether expected outcomes and learning objective are being achieved. NOTE: You do not need to collect data from the same sources every year. Rather, some kind of assessment rotation will be sufficient (e.g., Years1 & 3, collect data from graduating seniors, Years 2 & 4 collect data from employers and alumni, etc.).*

To better assess our learning goals, in 2009 the department implemented a mandatory 90-minute short answer/essay exit exam that is taken by graduating seniors in the Spring semester. The exam includes questions addressing each of our learning goals. Students do not need to obtain a particular grade on the exam; they simply need to take it to graduate. Department faculty will grade the exams, assess student learning, and then adjust course syllabi to address any objectives that are not being met.  
  
Capstone courses culminate with a final paper requiring original research. Professors for the respective capstone courses will evaluate seniors' papers to assess student learning and report to the other faculty with the same goals of the exit exam evaluation in mind. The department also assesses student learning through less formal qualitative methods, including students’ performance in research projects (FURSCA, theses, directed studies, research assistants), as well as post-graduation success: getting into graduate schools and securing desired employment.

**Step 5: Analyze and interpret the data (Due October 1, 2009 with preliminary data; Due November 2, 2009 with final data for this assessment cycle)**

All three sociology faculty members graded parts of each exit exam before we met to discuss the exam results and our assessment program. Four sociology majors took the 2008-2009 senior exit exam at the end of the Spring 2009 semester. Responses to the four questions on our exam ranged from adequate to less than adequate. In particular, students struggled with the data analysis question asking them to discuss probability and non-probability sampling designs. Given that we suggest sociology majors take our research methods course (A&S 224) their sophomore year (and we didn’t have them study for the exit exam) the results were not surprising (but still disappointing).

This academic year marks the launch of our incorporation of capstone research projects. We will have our initial data on this component after the 2009-2010 academic year.  
  
Some of our recent graduates have been admitted into excellent Ph.D. programs in sociology, including 2008 graduates Mike Light (Penn State University) and Bethany Coston (Stony Brook University).

(enter step 5 here)

**Step 6: How will the data collected be used for decision-making, strategic planning, etc. (Due October 1, 2009 with preliminary data; Due November 2, 2009 with final data for this assessment cycle)**

*NOTE:You will need to submit a summary report of your findings to the Assessment Committee for review. In that report, please include details of how the data will be used, any program changes that will be made (or not made). Questions to ask yourself/to include in the report are as follows:*

·       *How, exactly, will your data be used to help with program planning and improvement?*

·       *Will your program form a committee to review assessment findings, and make recommendations for change or improvement in a timely manner?*

·       *Will your entire department convene to discuss assessment results and program changes?*

·       *Who will make formal recommendations for curricular or other changes—the chair/head? The committee?*

As sociologists, we know that an initial sample of four students is simply not sizeable enough to draw any conclusions from our exit exam. We look forward to more and bigger graduating classes taking the exit exam in the coming years. Last year’s cohort of graduates was not our strongest, so in many ways we were not surprised that their overall subpar performance on the exit exam. Still, we must be thoughtful about the exam we’ve written. It is possible that we need to make some changes to it so that we can better measure whether students are acquiring the learning goals we’ve constructed. One adjustment we anticipate making for the 2010 exit exam is adding more information to the question on sampling designs, which should help them recall their training in this area and improve their responses to the question.