Sociology Department

Chairperson

Graduate Program Director

Graduate Program Coordinator
Wanda Vega, Ward Melville Social and Behavioral Sciences Building S-401 (631) 632-7730

Degrees Awarded
M.A. in Sociology; Ph.D. in Sociology

Description of Sociology Department

The Department of Sociology, in the College of Arts and Sciences, has a nationally ranked graduate program offering both the M.A. and Ph.D. degree.

The Department provides graduate training in sociology that is informed by a global perspective. Whether a sociological question addresses individual-level processes, ideas, or organizations, there are often global influences and implications connected to that phenomenon. Students pursuing an advanced degree in sociology will have opportunities to focus on global sociology and to learn how sociological methods and theories can be applied to the study of global social, cultural, political, and economic processes.

The sociology program grants the doctorate to three to six students per year. Most of these go on to university or college teaching positions or postdoctoral programs at other universities. A few enter government service, business, or applied research.

Admission to the Ph.D. and M.A. Program in Sociology

Applicants should specify on the application which degree program they wish to enter. Applicants seeking a Ph.D. degree should apply directly for acceptance to the Ph.D. program. (Applicants need not have an M.A. degree to apply to the Ph.D. program.) For admission to graduate study in sociology, the following, in addition to the minimum Graduate School requirements, are normally required:

A. A bachelor’s degree or its equivalent, as attested to by transcripts of previous academic work. Official transcripts from international colleges or universities must be evaluated by World Education Services.

B. Undergraduate statistics course.

C. Undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 or above.

D. Satisfactory results on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test. (Non-native speakers of English, in addition to taking the GRE, must take the TOEFL exam and receive a score of 550 (paper), 213 (computer) or 90 (iBT) or better to be considered for admission.)

E. Satisfactory recommendations from former instructors.

F. Acceptance by both the Department and the Graduate School.

Facilities of Sociology Department

The Ward Melville Social and Behavioral Sciences Building is networked by computers to a divisional network, University mainframes, and the Internet, as well as to the Social Sciences Data Lab’s computing facilities and data library. The Sociology Department has the only laboratory for the study of social systems in humans and animals existent in a sociology department; it is devoted to basic research in social organization. The department also has a Sociology Reading Room.

Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Sociology

In addition to the minimum Graduate School requirements, the following are required:

A. Courses
Course requirements for an M.A. in sociology include four designated courses, two in sociological theory and two in statistics, and an additional six elective courses totaling thirty credits. Students must achieve a minimum 3.0 grade point average for 30 credits of graduate level courses.

B. Writing Requirement
Students are required to write a theoretical/empirical research paper as described in the writing option (Section D, Option 2.1, Mandatory Theoretical/Empirical Paper) for the Ph.D. program. This paper will constitute an original piece of social science research evaluated formally by two faculty members.

Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree in Sociology

In addition to the minimum Graduate School requirements, the following are required:

A. Residence
Minimum residence is one year of full-time study. Students may be admitted to the Ph.D. program on a part-time basis, but these arrangements usually require that the students appear on campus during certain periods of the normal working day. Full-time study entails 12 or more graduate credit hours per semester for those students entering without prior graduate study or fewer than 24 graduate credit hours, and nine or more graduate credit hours per semester for those students entering with more than 24 graduate credit hours or with advanced standing provided by prior graduate work. Since a graduate traineeship is considered part of the academic program, credit hours will be given for teaching or research assistantships as well as supervised teaching. Under specific conditions credit may be given for individual research work outside formal courses but under the supervision of faculty members.

B. Courses
Course requirements for a Ph.D. in sociology include five designated courses, two in sociological theory and three in statistics and methods. Of an additional nine required courses, one must be taken in introduction to global sociology and another, which must provide additional methodological training, can be chosen by the student from a variety of suitable offerings specified by the department. Three of the remaining eight required courses may be taken outside the department, upon written approval from the department’s graduate committee. These three courses must be completed with at least a B average.

During the first year of study full-time students who have fewer than 24 graduate credit hours take eight courses; full-time students who have 24 or more graduate credit hours from prior graduate study take six courses. These must include two two-course sequences, one in sociological theory (SOC 505 and SOC 506) and one in statistics (SOC 501 and SOC 502), plus a methods course (SOC 504) and one elective course. For those holding graduate traineeships, a teaching assistantship under the supervision of a faculty member would consist of two of the eight courses (one each semester).

C. M.A. Degree
A student is awarded the M.A. degree as a sign of progress toward the Ph.D. To receive the M.A. a student must complete:

1. Two consecutive semesters of full-time study, achieving a 3.0 grade point average for 30 hours of graduate work.

2. One of the two papers required by the writing option (Section D, Option 2) for the Ph.D. program.

D. Professional Competence Options
Continuing doctoral students have two options for completing the first half of the doctoral program before moving on to work in a special field and on their dissertation.

Option 1—Comprehensive Examination and M.A. Research Report: In this rather traditional option, the adequacy of a student’s general preparation is evaluated by means of a written comprehensive examination. This examination, to be taken between the beginning of the fifth semester and the beginning of the sixth semester of graduate study, must be passed at the standard set by the department for doctoral-level work. A student who fails to pass this examination at the required level, but whose performance is satisfactory in all other aspects, may be permitted to take a terminal M.A. by completing 30 credits of graduate coursework and submitting an acceptable research report. Upon passing the comprehensive examination, the student must submit a research report that demonstrates ability to analyze empirical data and to present findings clearly and systematically. Upon successful completion of all of the above requirements, along with completion of a minimum of 30 hours of graduate credit, the department will recommend to the dean of the Graduate School that the student be awarded the M.A. degree as a sign of progress toward the Ph.D. Recipients of the terminal M.A. will not be granted permission to continue.

Option 2—The Two Papers: In this option, a student can meet M.A. requirements and proceed to the second half of doctoral work through the submission of two papers written under faculty supervision. These should normally be completed by the end of the third academic year, and each of the two papers is designed to allow students to demonstrate a different competence. Each paper should be more substantial than a seminar paper and less substantial than an M.A. thesis; two different substantive areas must be represented in the papers. The two papers are designed to demonstrate competence in the kinds of skills that students will need in the profession of sociology. One of these papers must be a theoretical/ empirical paper and the second can be either a second theoretical/empirical paper, an analytical review of the literature, or an analytical review of the literature embedded in a grant proposal. In other words, one paper must be theoretical/empirical and the second may be chosen from among the three possible kinds of papers described below.

1. Mandatory Theoretical/Empirical Paper: The majority of sociological articles use empirical data to answer theoretical questions. Such questions often arise from previous research. They can also be the result of juxtaposing two or more theories, or finding that a theory could use further development or clarification on a point, and then showing how the proposed development or clarification better explains some specific aspect or aspects of social reality.

The empirical data explained or clarified by the theory or theories can take a number of forms. It can be the product of ethnographies, comparative and/or historical research, social surveys, small group or experimental laboratory research, content analyses, etc. The important point is to combine theory and empirical research.

2. Analytical review of the literature: This paper is to be an assessment of the state of the art in some substantive area of sociology. This paper can take various forms. One possibility is a review essay and examples of this form can be found in the Journal of Economic Literature, the Psychological Review, or the Annual Review of Sociology. A second approach could be a review of a field that could serve as the substantive underpinning for a graduate seminar.

3. Analytical review of the literature embedded in a grant proposal: This is to be a major grant proposal. It should normally include a review of the relevant literature, statements of the theoretical framework being used, the hypotheses to be tested, and methodology to be employed in the project. The proposal does not have to be submitted to a funding agency, but all the materials required by a particular agency or foundation must be completed and, in addition, the project must receive CORIHS (Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects) approval, if human
subjects are involved. This proposal must also be of substantial size. A very short proposal of just a few pages is not adequate even if that is acceptable to some particular agency.

Upon successful completion of all of the above requirements, along with completion of 30 hours of graduate credit, the student may proceed to the advanced stage of his or her doctoral work.

E. Teaching Requirement
Graduate training includes supervised teaching experience. In the fall semester of their third year, students enroll in a teaching practicum to prepare them to teach their own course, under supervision, the following semester or in the Fall semester of their fourth year.

F. Preliminary Examination
This takes the form of an oral examination in the student’s specialty to be given only after all the above requirements have been met. It is designed to appraise the depth of knowledge in the broad area from which the student has selected a dissertation topic. The content of this area is to be defined individually for each student. It consists of a generally recognized, broad subfield and must deal with related materials from other subfields.

G. Advancement to Candidacy
The department’s recommendation that a student be advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. is based on passing the preliminary examination and approval of a dissertation proposal.

H. Doctoral Dissertation
This must be an independent piece of research and scholarship representing an original contribution, the results of which are worthy of publication. Upon oral defense and acceptance of the dissertation, the department will recommend to the dean of the Graduate School that the student be awarded the Ph.D. degree.

The progress of every student will be evaluated by the department at the end of the first full year of graduate study. Those whose performance and ability are clearly below the standard established by the department for the Ph.D. will be asked to withdraw before they have made a costly investment of time. If more than seven years have elapsed since the student completed 24 hours of graduate courses in the department, the student’s Ph.D. candidacy will lapse. After the first year, a progressively larger proportion of a student’s time will be spent as a participant in research activities, under the supervision of faculty members. Ordinarily, a student with adequate preparation and involved in full-time study should be able to earn a Ph.D. within five to six years from the start of graduate work.

Students who arrive with an M.A. degree in sociology or with three semesters of work in the discipline will be expected to complete some of the requirements above more quickly than indicated.

Faculty of Sociology Department

Distinguished Professors
Cole, Stephen, Ph.D., 1967, Columbia University: Science; gender; theory.

Gagnon, John H., Emeritus. Ph.D., 1969, University of Chicago: AIDS research; simulations; sexual conduct; social control; cognitive.

Distinguished Service Professors
Arjomand, Said, Ph.D., 1980, University of Chicago: Comparative; historical; political; religion.

Goodman, Norman, also a Distinguished Teaching Professor. Ph.D., 1963, New York University: Social psychology; family; socialization; emotions.

Distinguished Teaching Professor
Tanur, Judith, Emerita Ph.D., 1972, University at Stony Brook: Statistics; methodology; survey research; social psychology.

Professors
Barthel-Bouchier, Diane, Ph.D., 1977, Harvard University: Culture; community; historical; gender.

Chase, Ivan, Ph.D., 1972, Harvard University: Social organization; behavioral processes in small groups; resource allocation; collective action; cross-species comparisons.

Feldman, Kenneth, Ph.D., 1965, University of Michigan: Social psychology; higher education; socialization.

Kimmel, Michael, Ph.D., 1981, University of California, Berkeley: Comparative and historical development; social movements; gender and sexuality.

Roxborough, Ian, Ph.D., 1977, University of Wisconsin-Madison: War and military; historical; revolutions; economic.

Schwartz, Michael, Chairperson, Ph.D., 1971, Harvard University: Methodology; historical; political economy; business structure; social movements.

Tyree, Andrea, Emerita. Ph.D., 1968, University of Chicago: Demography; social stratification; ethnicity; marital violence.

Associate Professors
Levy, Daniel, Ph.D., 1999, Columbia University: Political sociology; comparative/historical sociology; global sociology.
Moran, Timothy, Graduate Program Director, Ph.D., 2000, University of Maryland: Social inequality; global political economy; contentious collective action; quantitative methods.
Oyewumi, Oyeronke, Ph.D., 1993, University of California, Berkeley: Gender; race; family; culture; knowledge; social inequalities; globalization.

Assistant Professors
Shandra, John, Ph.D., 2005, Boston College: Quantitative methods; environmental sociology.
van de Rijt, Arnout, Ph.D., 2007, Cornell University: Social networks; migration and immigration; quantitative methodology.

Lecturers
Marrone, Catherine, Ph.D., 1995, Stony Brook University: Medical sociology, gender, work and professions, sociology of human reproduction, sociology of aging.

Research Faculty
Schwartz, Joseph, Professor, Ph.D., 1978, Harvard University: Quantitative methods; social stratification; sociology of work and occupations; social networks.

Number of teaching, graduate, and research assistants, fall 2009: 24

1) Recipient of the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1992
2) Joint appointment, Department of Psychology
3) Recipient of State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1976
4) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1990. Recipient of the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1990
5) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1989. Recipient of the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1989
6) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1995. Recipient of the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1995
7) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1975
8) Joint appointment, Department of Psychiatry

NOTE: The course descriptions for this program can be found in the corresponding program PDF or at COURSE SEARCH.