**Department of Sociology**

**University of Oregon**

**2017 Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

In 2017, the Sociology Department assessed departmental Learning Outcome #3. This objective states that “Students will be proficient in basic research methods including interviews, direct observation, content analysis, and surveys. They will know how to collect and analyze data, and how to identify appropriate methods for answering different sociological questions.”

The assessment plan comprised two strategies. First, the assessment committee evaluated department syllabi to assess which of sociology courses contribute to this learning outcome. Second the assessment committee administered a survey to students in three sociology classes to evaluate their understanding of basic research methods.

In general we found that sociological research methods are addressed throughout the curriculum and that students with more exposure to sociology curriculum, especially curriculum focused on research methods, proved more proficient in basic research methods.

**Departmental Syllabi**

Instruction about research methods and design is concentrated in Soc 311, Research Methods, and Soc 312, Quantitative Methods in Sociology (both required courses for Sociology Majors). Sociology courses across the curriculum include various types of instruction about research methods, from a basic introduction, to requiring students to engage in specific research methods/research design to evaluating sociological research.

In Soc 311, Research Methods, students learn the basic components of research design and methods used in sociological research as well as how to evaluate the appropriateness of a given method for a particular research question. Soc 312, Quantitative Methods in Sociology teaches students a range of components central to sociological research – basic statistics, writing and fielding surveys, analyzing existing and original datasets with different statistical software packages.

Soc 204, Introduction to Sociology, and Soc 207, Social Inequality discuss methods. One of these courses is required for all Sociology Majors. Introduction to Sociology courses address a range of traditional sociological research methods. Both courses often require that students engage in basic forms of data collection such as looking up data about themselves or the attributes of a city in the American Community Survey (part of the Census) or engaging in content analysis, for instance. Soc 204, Introduction to Sociology, tends to emphasize research methods more so than Soc 207, Social Inequality.

Upper division courses focus less on introducing basic research methods and more on requiring students to gather original research or to evaluate existing research. Some 300 level classes, such as Soc 300, Family Sociology or Soc 328, Self and Society, require students to gather original qualitative research using interview or ethnography techniques. Most 400-level courses use a lecture and discussion model where students write reactions to readings. In these classes students read many data-rich, empirical studies. Some 400-level courses, ask student to collect and/or analyze data. Examples include, collecting network data and analyzing it with UCInet; collecting data on the urban environment and analyzing it with simple graphs; calculating simple demographic rates or indices. Soc 407, Honors Thesis, covers research design and the most common research methods, at an advanced level.

**Student Assessment**

We asked students in three classes to complete the attached assessment. Students were tasked with designing a research question, choosing a research method/briefly describing the research instrument and evaluating the strengths and weakness of their approach.

We received 151 responses out of which 143 were complete. The results were computed based on the 143 complete responses. Each individual answer was evaluated on a scale of 0-2. 0 designated an insufficient answer; 1 designated an adequate, but not complete answer; 2 designated a strong answer. The total number of points available was 6 (3 and 4 were treated as 1 answer).

Here are the mean assessment scores by student group:

* Mean assessment score: 5.4.
* Students how have taken 2 or fewer sociology classes: 5.2
* Students who have taken 3 or more sociology classes: 5.5
* Students who have taken Soc 311, Research Methods: 5.5
* Students who have not had not taken Soc 311, Research Methods: 5.3
* Sociology Majors: 5.6
* Non-Sociology Majors: 5.2

In general students improved their score the more sociology classes they took. Those students who had taken Soc 311, Research Methods, performed better than those who had not. Finally Sociology majors performed better than non sociology majors/minors.

**Conclusion**

This assessment indicates that Soc 311 is accomplishing the goal of teaching research methods and design. These lessons are reinforced throughout the curriculum either through teaching students to gather their own data, to evaluate original or existing data and/or to evaluate and understand existing sociological research.

**Assessment**

**Year**: 1 2 3 4 5

**Major**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­\_\_\_ **Minor**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­\_\_

**What sociology classes have you taken?**

\_\_\_\_\_ 204 Introduction to Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 207 Social Inequality

\_\_\_\_\_ 301 American Society

\_\_\_\_\_ 303 World Population

\_\_\_\_\_ 304 Community, Environment & Society

\_\_\_\_\_ 310 Development of Sociology/Social

Theory

\_\_\_\_\_ 311 Intro to Social Research/Research

Methods

\_\_\_\_\_ 312 Quantitative Methods in

Sociology/Statistical Analysis

\_\_\_\_\_ 313 Social Issues and Movements

\_\_\_\_\_ 328 Introduction to Social

Psychology/Self & Society

\_\_\_\_\_ 345 Race, Class & Ethnic Groups/Race

& Ethnicity

\_\_\_\_\_ 346 Work and Occupations

\_\_\_\_\_ 347 Complex Organizations

\_\_\_\_\_ 355 Sociology of Gender

\_\_\_\_\_ 370 Urban Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 380 Intro: Deviance, Control, and

Crime

\_\_\_\_\_ 399 Special Studies

\_\_\_\_\_ 408 Careers in Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 412/512: Sociological Research

Methods

\_\_\_\_\_ 413/513: Sociological Research

Methods

\_\_\_\_\_ 415/515 Social Demography (

\_\_\_\_\_ 416/516 Issues in Environmental

Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 420/520 Political Economy

\_\_\_\_\_ 425/525 Issues in Family Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 442/542 Issues in Urban Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 445/545 Sociology of Race Relations

\_\_\_\_\_ 446/546 Issues in Sociology of Work [

\_\_\_\_\_ 447/547 Issues in Sociology of

Organizations

\_\_\_\_\_ 450/550 Sociology of Developing Areas

\_\_\_\_\_ 451/551 Social Stratification

\_\_\_\_\_ 452/552 Issues of Migration

\_\_\_\_\_ 455/555 Issues in Sociology of Gender

\_\_\_\_\_ 456/556 Feminist Theory (

\_\_\_\_\_ 457/557 Sex and Society

\_\_\_\_\_ 461/561 Sociology of Religion

\_\_\_\_\_ 464/564 Systems of War and Peace

\_\_\_\_\_ 465/565 Political Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 467/567 Economic Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_ 475/575 Marxist Sociological Theory

\_\_\_\_\_ 480/580 Crime and Social Control

\_\_\_\_\_ 484/584 Issues in Deviance, Control,

and Crime

\_\_\_\_\_ 491/591 Sociology of Education

\_\_\_\_\_ 401 Research

\_\_\_\_\_ 404 Internship

\_\_\_\_\_ 405 Reading

\_\_\_\_\_ 406 Supervised Field Study

\_\_\_\_\_ 407 Thesis for Honors Students

The University of Oregon has hired you, a talented sociology major, to conduct a study that will describe student drinking behavior, student feelings about drinking, and possible solutions to problematic college drinking. According to the Princeton Review, Niche and Newsweek, University of Oregon has been declining in its party school status. However, students, parents, and administrators alike are still concerned about excessive drinking among UO students.

Drinking at college has become a ritual that students often see as an important part of their higher education experience. Many students come to college with established drinking habits, and the college environment can exacerbate the problem. According to a national survey, almost 60 percent of college students ages 18–22 drank alcohol in the past month, and almost 2 out of 3 of them engaged in binge drinking.

About 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall. In a national survey of college students, binge drinkers who consumed alcohol at least 3 times per week were roughly 6 times more likely than those who drank but never binged to perform poorly on a test or project as a result of drinking (40 percent vs. 7 percent) and 5 times more likely to have missed a class (64 percent vs. 12 percent).

While some see college drinking as a harmless rite of passage, it often results in adverse consequences for students and their schools.Consequences for students includemissed classes, poor school performance, withdrawal from courses, and dropping out**.** Health problems includealcohol use disorder and other alcohol-related problems, such as sleep issues and depression**.** Acute risks include impaired driving, unsafe sex, fights, sexual assaults, suicide attempts, unintentional injuries, overdoses, and death.Even students who don’t drink may experience secondhand effects, such as disrupted study and sleep, or being the victim of an alcohol-related assault.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In answering the following questions, draw upon your sociological expertise in research methods to briefly design a research study that would examine the problem of student drinking on your campus by addressing the following four prompts.

1. Write a research question that would enable you to address some of the problems related to harmful or excessive drinking.
2. What research method would you use to answer your question? (Circle one)

Survey

Experiment

Interviews

Ethnography

Content Analysis

Network Analysis

1. How would you go about collecting the data to answer your research question? Include a discussion of the following aspects of research design, if appropriate: where you would gather the data, who would you gather the data from, and what types of questions or observations or other research instruments would be used?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this method versus another method used by sociologists?
1. This was taken from National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ‘s “Alcohol Intervention Matrix” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)