

Global Learning Initiative

Department of Sociology

Introduction:

Sociology as a discipline emerged in the early Nineteenth Century in the midst of chaotic social change in Western Europe caused by rapid population growth, industrialization, urbanization, and major political paradigm shifts. Standing on the shoulders of preceding social philosophers, the new discipline, out of necessity, developed within the framework of macro social structural and historical influences that were impacting the social organization of human societies. The new discipline's core unit ideas were framed by the founders to be the study of: community, social structure, social inequality, social change, and social interaction.

Almost two hundred years later, the discipline's unit ideas that fire the imagination of its practitioners and students remain unchanged while the interconnectedness of the world's human populations has shifted the focus of attention from within the nation state to the global community. While an important boundary change from the national to the international has taken place, the unit ideas of sociology examining the community, the social structure, social inequality, social change, and interaction remain the same. Yet, importantly, in light of exponential human population growth from 1 billion at sociology's inception to approximately 7 billion today, another sociological unit idea has emerged: sustainability of community in the context of the larger environment based concomitantly on exponential demand for natural resources with implications for ecological integrity of the planet.

The sociology program at NAU has been sensitive to the unit ideas of our discipline and during the last five years we have accelerated our efforts to address the emerging global sociological issues by integrating the following specific components within our program:

1. Course offerings at undergraduate level that address global issues of ethnic diversity, inequality, environmental and sustainability issues of population include: SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology; SOC 204: Sociology of Gender; SOC 210: Social Problems; SOC 215: Race and Ethnic Relations; SOC 318: Medical Sociology; SOC 319: Population and Environment; SOC 330: Macrosociology; SOC 333: Environment and Society; SOC 353: Social Stratification; SOC 414: Population and Demography; SOC 415: Sociology of Globalization; and SOC 444: Environment and Social Change.

2. Course offerings at the graduate level that address global issues include: SOC 515: Race and Ethnic Relations; SOC 633: Environmental Sociology; SOC 656: Program Evaluation; and SOC 661: Demography.
3. We have developed a dual MA Program with the University of Botswana that enhance curriculum integration and student exchange opportunities through which interested students can complete a Master of Arts Program in two years, receiving degrees from NAU as well as the University of Botswana.

The aforementioned courses tie in directly with our global learning outcomes and strategies that follow below.

Global Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will have a critical understanding of the commonalities among local and global social structures (dominant religious traditions, political and economic systems, family types) and how those structures and institutions influence individual experiences and the larger social context.
2. Students will understand how socio-historical forces influence contemporary societies especially as this relates to issues of power, inequality, racial and ethnic relations and stratification.
3. Students will understand how race and ethnicity plays itself out in terms of population movements, border crossings, and the formation of diasporas. They will be able to critically assess societies in terms of similarities and differences as well as the changing and enduring patterns within societies.
4. Students will have knowledge of how individual and societal experiences vary by gender, family structure, social class, race, ethnicity and culture, and age – both locally and in societies around the world.
5. Students will understand sustainability in terms of social, economic, and ecological dimensions and how diverse social groups are differentially situated in relation to, or impacted by, the environment.

Global Learning Strategies:

1. The outcomes articulated above are objectives that will be addressed via the teaching of three core classes in the sociology major (Introduction to Sociology, Sociological Thought (theory), and our Capstone Seminar). While not every outcome can be covered in each class, we feel confident that all the stated objectives will be met by the time students complete all their core classes.
2. Make available local internships with agencies that serve diverse/minority communities.

3. Develop international internships in sociology where students will have opportunities to work in environments that further their understanding of the global learning objectives.
4. Negotiate direct agreements with select partner universities overseas to allow sociology majors to enroll in specific courses that will transfer as credit towards the major. Students will be encouraged to study abroad during the spring semester of their junior year or the fall semester of their senior year.
5. Students will be advised to enroll in the following courses to strengthen their understanding of issues around diversity:
 - Race and Ethnic Relations
 - Sociology of Gender
 - Courses in Women and Gender Studies
 - Courses in Ethnic Studies (e.g., Global Race and Ethnic Relations)
6. Students will be advised to enroll in the following courses to strengthen their understanding of issues around sustainability:
 - Population and environment
 - Population and demography
 - Environment and society
7. The sociology department will sponsor or co-sponsor, each year, an international film series and faculty will be encouraged to award credit to students who attend these films and prepare a report.
8. A pre-departure component (or course) will be developed for each faculty-led program and also for students enrolled in international internships and department sponsored study abroad programs. This will serve the purpose of reinforcing the global learning objectives and will help students to make the link between their abroad experiences and the major in general. Participation in this pre-departure activity will be a prerequisite for participating in these international learning experiences.
9. The sociology department will continue to support and encourage the offering of short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs.
10. Faculty and other staff involved in academic advising will be coached on how best to incorporate the global learning objectives as they advise majors in developing their respective programs of study.
11. A sociology course that will be electronically co-convened between faculty in the NAU sociology department and faculty at Auckland University of Technology is currently being developed. It is our goal to encourage this same model at select partner universities around the world in an effort to expose students to sociological perspectives in other cultural settings and help foster relationships between our local students and those in other international locales. This experience would be particularly beneficial to those who may not have had an education abroad opportunity.

Assessing Global Learning:

1. Faculty members are committed to making attempts to embed the global learning objectives in the assignments associated with the courses they teach.
2. Specific questions related to the global learning objective would then be incorporated into the faculty assessment instrument that is administered annually.
3. Findings arising from assessment processes will be reviewed annually to improve and/or modify course structures and offerings and to aid in better advising majors.
4. Questions will be incorporated in the student exit survey regarding the extent to which students perceive that they were exposed to the global learning objectives.

Assessment Protocols and Integration of Global Learning Outcomes:

In the spring of 2006, the Sociology Undergraduate Assessment Committee was organized and plans were made to advance our assessment plans for our undergraduate degree programs in Sociology. Prior to this, our plan involved the use of a standardized exam purchased from the national scholastic testing service. After several years, feedback from students and faculty suggested this format was not consistent with the goals or philosophy of the program. A formal committee was convened at the direction of the chair and the faculty and charged with the creation of a more suitable approach. The committee consulted a publication of a national professional organization, the American Sociological Association (ASA), *Creating an Effective Assessment Plan for the Sociology Major*. A national task force on assessing undergraduate programs in sociology created this handbook to provide specific guidelines for an assessment plan. The committee relied on the steps recommended by the ASA and adapted them to the mission of NAU and the Sociology Department. The committee also consulted the assessment plans of sociology departments at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Northeastern Illinois University, and California State University, Sacramento. The resulting assessment plan was reviewed and accepted by the entire Sociology faculty.

The Sociology Undergraduate Assessment Committee, beginning in 2006 and continuing each year through 2009, specified learning outcomes for graduating Sociology majors, determined appropriate and feasible assessment activities, collected and analyzed data and prepared a report specifying our findings. Each year, the committee met to discuss the assessment plan in place and determine if changes were needed. Once this was completed, assessment activities commenced and findings were compiled. Contained in each report are instructor summaries of analyses of student final papers, final exams, and/or student final projects in core courses. Also included are summaries of analyses of the Survey of Graduating Senior Sociology Majors. In addition, in 2009, students in two of the senior seminars wrote

reflective papers analyzing their undergraduate experiences. These papers were analyzed by the instructor and themes were presented to the assessment committee.

The following table reflects learning outcomes and assessment activities currently in place:

Learning Outcome: [Upon completion of the program students will:]	Assessment Activity:
Have the ability to use and apply sociological theories to a multiplicity of arenas of social life.	Assessed in SOC201 Development of Sociological Thought and demonstrated in student final papers.
Understand the application of social science methods.	Assessed in SOC355W Research Methods and demonstrated in student final projects.
Understand the application of social science statistics.	Assessed in SOC365 Social Statistics and demonstrated in student final exams.
Have a critical understanding of the impact of social structure on life experiences.	Assessed and demonstrated in the graduating senior survey.
Apply sociological theory, knowledge, and methodologies in effort to address contemporary issues and problems facing society and the community.	Assessed in SOC408 Sociology Internship and demonstrated in student final papers and field supervisor evaluations. [BA/BS Sociology majors may take up to six credit hours of SOC408; BA/BS Applied Sociology majors may take up to 12 credits hours of SOC408].

With the infusion of global learning objectives into the sociology curriculum, the Sociology Undergraduate Assessment Committee will incorporate the proposed global learning outcomes in the Sociology assessment plan. Specifically, upon completion of an undergraduate degree in Sociology, students will:

1. Have a critical understanding of the commonalities among local and global social structures (dominant religious traditions, political and economic systems, family types) and how those structures and institutions influence individual experiences and the larger social context.
2. Understand how socio-historical forces influence contemporary societies especially as this relates to issues of power, inequality, racial and ethnic relations and stratification.
3. Understand how race and ethnicity plays itself out in terms of population movements, border crossings, and the formation of diasporas. Students

will be able to critically assess societies in terms of similarities and differences and changing and enduring patterns within societies.

4. Have knowledge of how individual and societal experiences vary by gender, family structure, social class, race, ethnicity and culture, and age – both locally and in societies around the world.
5. Understand sustainability in terms of social, economic, and ecological dimensions and how diverse social groups are differentially situated in relation to or impacted by the environment.

Assessment activities will involve:

1. Faculty who teach core courses, specifically SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology, SOC 201: Development of Sociological Thought, and SOC 498C: Sociology Capstone, will embed global learning objectives in assignments, final papers/projects, and/or exams in their courses.
2. Questions regarding the extent of student exposure to the global learning objectives will be incorporated in the Survey of Graduating Senior Sociology Majors.
3. Students will be required to demonstrate global learning outcomes in their final internship papers when their fieldwork is at an agency whose mission is to serve diverse/minority communities and/or whose work furthers student understanding of the global learning objectives.

These assessment activities will be analyzed by Sociology faculty and summaries of their analyses will be incorporated into the final assessment report. As is the case with the current assessment plan, findings arising from the assessment processes will be reviewed annually to improve and/or modify course structures and offerings and to aid in better advising majors.

Conclusion:

As can be discerned from the preceding, the sociology department due to its subject matter has already in place courses and foci of interest that augment a global learning agenda. Looking forward to enhancing the initiative and integrating the implementation process, we envision that by Fall Semester 2010 we will have an assessment procedure in place that will focus on selected specific courses as core components of the global initiative. The syllabi for the identified courses will reflect the integration of global initiative components and will be tied in to the assessment process for the both the Office of University Assessment, as well as for the Global Learning Initiative.