Assessment Report

Department/Program: **Sociology**   Chair: **Henry Pontell**

Degree /Minor/Certificate/or other Program: **Sociology**

Time Period Covered for this Assessment Review: **Spring 2015**

Assessment occurred in the following courses:

Course	Semester and Year
SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology	**Spring 2015**
SOC 232 Social Stratification	**Spring 2015**

Summary Report

SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology was assessed in Spring of 2015, when a sample of assessed work was submitted. Analyses of the results and departmental consultation with regards to the recommendations took place thereafter.

SOC 232 Social Stratification was assessed in Spring of 2015, when a sample of assessed work was submitted. Analyses of the results and departmental consultation with regards to the recommendations took place thereafter.

Direct Assessment of Learning Goals   (See Appendix 1 for grading rubrics for each course.)

Robert Garot (RG) assessed 29 out of 31 final papers submitted from his Introduction to Sociology Course (two papers were missing pages), and 18 out of 18 final papers submitted from his Social Stratification Course. As a check on reliability, Andrew Karmen (AK) assessed 12 out of 31 papers from Garot's Introduction to Sociology Course (hereafter Intro) and 7 out of 18 final papers from Garot's Social Stratification Course (hereafter Strat). Garot and Karmen agreed on 43% of their assessments for Intro and 49% of their assessments for Strat. Below are the average scores provided by both reviewers per class, with 4=exceeds expectations, 3=meets expectations, 2=approaches expectations, and 1=does not meet expectations.

Average Scores	Garot	Karmen
Intro	2.8	3.05
Strat	3.02	3.62

Karmen's assessments tended to be slightly more favorable than Garot's. This may simply be due to the fact that he randomly happened to choose a subset of higher quality papers. Also, scores for both reviewers for Strat tend to be higher than scores for Intro, which would be expected as it is a 200 level course.

Below are are assessments for both classes according to the five learning goals for the major.

Learning Goal(s) Assessed	Course Number	Sample Size RG, AK	Exceeds Expectations RG	AK	Meets Expectations RG	AK	Approaches Expectations RG	AK	Does Not Meet Expectations RG	AK
1. Demonstrate through assignments and class discussion a sociological imagination, i.e., the ability to see connections between local, personal experiences and larger global, societal forces, and between individual troubles and pervasive social problems, in a global context.	SOC101	Final paper = 29, 12	28%	67%	24%	8%	41%	17%	7%	8%
	SOC232	Final paper = 18, 7	28%	100%	39%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%
2. Understand through readings and class discussion how the scientific study of society transcends common sense beliefs and conventional wisdom about people's attitudes and behaviors.	SOC101	Final paper = 29, 12	17%	17%	45%	58%	38%	8%	0%	17%
	SOC232	Final paper = 18, 7	16%	71%	33%	28%	44%	0%	5%	0%
3. Test the veracity of research hypotheses and be able to formulate basic research questions to guide studies of societal behavior, processes, and institutions by using qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting evidence.	SOC101	Final paper = 29, 12	0%	25%	14%	50%	38%	17%	41%	8%
	SOC232	Final paper = 18, 7	0%	29%	17%	71%	39%	0%	44%	0%
4. Demonstrate familiarity with written works of classic and contemporary sociological theories that explain why people think and act as they do.	SOC101	Final paper = 29, 12	14%	50%	45%	25%	31%	25%	7%	0%
	SOC232	Final paper = 18, 7	11%	57%	22%	43%	33%	0%	33%	0%
5. Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of sociological concepts through writing, explanatory, and presentational skills.	SOC101	Final paper = 29, 12	14%	25%	51%	58%	31%	8%	3%	8%
	SOC232	Final paper = 18, 7	11%	71%	28%	14%	39%	14%	22%	0%

For Intro, students excelled on Learning Outcome #1, demonstrating an ability to apply the sociological imagination. This is predictable, as the sociological imagination is the central concept in this course, to which students return on a weekly basis. Students demonstrate less ability to formulate research hypotheses and address them using qualitative and quantitative

methodologies (LO #3). Again, this is to be expected from Intro students, who have not yet been exposed to the wide range and complexity of research methodologies. For the other three learning objectives, most students are either meeting or approaching expectations.

For Strat, students also scored toward the high end on Learning Outcome #1, with no students not meeting expectations according to Garot, and all students exceeding expectations according to Karmen. Again, as with Intro, the students do most poorly, according to Garot, on Learning Outcome 3, involving research methodologies, although Karmen found that all students either met or exceeded expectations. As is the case with Intro, students have not yet taken a research methodology course, so their ability to test hypotheses through data gathering is gestational. Garot and Karmen evince a wide discrepancy on Learning Outcome 4, where Garot finds that one-third of the students do not meet expectations, but Karmen finds that 57% of the students exceed expectations. This is likely due to the fact that Garot taught this course, and therefore looks at how students incorporate the literature from the course with a more severe eye. This might also explain a similar, though less marked discrepancy in determining how many students did not meet Learning Outcome Five. The most likely explanation is that Karmen, in randomly choosing papers to evaluate, skipped the less adequate papers.

All papers for both classes were scanned into one file for each course, attached. The papers that exemplify each score for each Learning Outcome are as follows (listed by paper number per course, student's initials, and page where found in file):

Learning Goal(s) Assessed	Course Number	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
1. Demonstrate through assignments and class discussion a sociological imagination, i.e., the ability to see connections between local, personal experiences and larger global, societal forces, and between individual troubles and pervasive social problems, in a global context.	SOC101	#4, AC, p. 13	#9, XP, p. 49	#2, DB, p. 3	#1, PG, p. 1
	SOC232	#18, BK, p. 136	#4, R J-B, p. 23	#10, DM, p. 73	No papers rec'd this grade
2. Understand through readings and class discussion how the scientific study of society transcends common sense beliefs and conventional wisdom about people's attitudes and behaviors.	SOC101	#8, SC, p. 41	#3, KJ, p. 8	#7, JA, p. 33	#2, DB, p. 3
	SOC232	#5, CS, p. 31	#9, NL, p. 65	#12, KV, p. 90	#1, AK, p. 1
3. Test the veracity of research hypotheses and be able to formulate basic research questions to guide studies of societal behavior, processes, and institutions by using qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting evidence.	SOC101	#14, RG, p. 78	#5, JJ, p. 19	#9, XP, p. 49	#13, PL, p. 74
	SOC232	#7, KV, p. 45	#5, CS, p. 31	#17, JW, p. 132	#8, MA, p. 56
4. Demonstrate familiarity with written works of classic and contemporary sociological theories that explain why people think and act as they do.	SOC101	#29, NK, p. 181	#6, MK, p, 27	#3, KJ, p. 8	#2, DB, p. 3
	SOC232	#9, NL, p. 65	#4, R J-B, p. 23	#15, AKS, p. 114	#2, EB, p. 8
5. Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of sociological concepts through writing, explanatory, and presentational skills.	SOC101	#26, KB, p. 158	#14, RG, p. 78	#2, DB, p. 3	#1, PG, p. 1
	SOC232	#18, BK, p. 136	#3, KV, p. 14	#4, R J-B, p. 23	#1, AK, p. 1

Indirect Assessment of Learning Goals

Syllabi for all courses were reviewed to ensure compliancy and consistency in terms of subject matter. Model syllabi are now available for all courses.

Conclusions: What did you discover about student learning in your program?

Preliminary Findings about student learning from the assessment data analyzed so far:
Overall, we may want to revisit our Learning Objectives (LOs) for the major. The two pillars of science are logic and observations, which in sociology we study as theory and methodology. We have divided concerns for these two aspects of our craft into Five LOs. LOs 1, 2, 4 and 5 concern theory, while only LO 3 is specifically concerned with method. At times it was difficult to differentiate between just how LOs 1, 2, 4 and 5 are to be differentiated when applied to assessing outcomes, as each one is not exhaustive and they are certainly not mutually exclusive. Also, we may want to have more LOs regarding methodology.

Learning Objective #1 concerning the sociological imagination, is crucial for our program, and distinguishes it from other programs that may focus on a particular area (micro-sociology, theory, family or demography, for instance), without necessarily prioritizing the understanding of private matters as public issues. Such an objective incorporates both theory and methodology in a thoughtful but not necessarily rigorous manner; therefore it is optimal for introductory courses and provides a solid grounding as concepts become more elaborate in higher level courses.

Learning Objective #2 overlaps substantially with LO #1, but with a different focus. Whereas LO #1 involves understanding everyday life in terms of social structural and historical forces, LO #2 involves questioning and perhaps overturning commonsense notions. Some commonsense notions may already incorporate an understanding of the sociological imagination, but many do not. Hence, LO #1 and LO #2 are not mutually exclusive. Some commonsense notions may accord with sociological findings, and a student may write an excellent paper that does not necessarily question or overturn commonsense notions. Also, it is not exactly clear what is meant by "commonsense" notions or how this is to be determined. *Hence, this LO may well be worth revisiting.*

Learning Objective #3 addresses the students' understanding of research methodologies, including formulating research questions, testing hypothesis, and gathering data. These are topics that are introduced in one week of Intro and are returned to briefly in both Intro and Strat. Such topics can become quite technical and comprise the subject matter for arguably our most difficult courses focusing on research methods. Yet such topics must be incorporated

into all courses, as students always need to question how data is gathered and the strengths and weaknesses of that method for supporting conclusions. Overall, our courses need to focus more on helping students to critically evaluate methodologies, and students need more encouragement in feeling capable and confident to critically evaluate the methodologies of professional studies. We may want to divide this LO into various LOs addressing different aspects of research methods, and/or add additional LOs regarding other aspects of research methodologies.

Learning Objective #4 regards how well students demonstrate an understanding of classical and contemporary sociological theory. This LO asks for the same matter as LOs #1 and #2, but with more specificity, depth and sophistication. Whereas LO #1 trumps LO #2, providing a more precise indicator of a similar goal, LO #4 asks students for specific knowledge from specific thinkers, systematically organized. In short, it addresses how well students are able to write a review of pertinent sociological literature, a necessary and unavoidable step in any analysis.

Learning Objective #5 addresses how well students are able to communicate with others. This is a central, vital and unavoidable concern of the arts and sciences in general, and the only truly exhaustive and mutually exclusive criteria on this scale.

SOC 101
We both were struck by the high quality of these students' papers, finding that over half the students meet or exceed expectations for LO #5. Prior outcome assessments for our sister Criminology Major have found that many students in the capstone course, SOC440 Senior Seminar, have problematic writing abilities. Garot worked with his students on writing throughout the course, building skills in a scaffolded manner. Nonetheless, Garot's impression is that the quality of our entering students' writing skills have been markedly improving over the years. Whether the writing of these students who happened to enroll in his Intro course are a random indicator of entering students' writing abilities in general, whether their writing abilities are coincidental, or whether they are due to Garot's efforts is impossible to determine with resources available to gather data.

Students evinced high scores in understanding the sociological imagination (LO #1), a primary objective of Garot's

approach to Intro. Students' lowest understandings were demonstrated in terms of LO #3, regarding research methods, as to be expected from introductory students. Most students met or exceeded expectations for questioning the commonsense (LO #2), and writing a literature review (LO #4).

SOC 232

This group of 18 students' papers divides roughly into thirds, with some students' papers exceeding expectations for most learning goals (papers #3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 18), some meeting most expectations (#10, 12, 14, 15, 17), and some working towards expectations (# 1, 2, 8, 11, 13, 16). As instructor for this course, Garot's impression is that this differentiation is based primarily on students' time in the U.S. and ability with English (LO #5). In other words, students' capacity on LO #5 is likely to be predictive of their ability on other LOs. In order to insure that most students meet the LOs, we may wish to implement a pre-test in English skills for students in this course, and for the major in general (as this is a gateway course to the major). Students with low scores can be provided with more assistance to master the readings and coherently present their insights, to bolster their chances at success throughout our major.

Students scored higher in general than Intro students, as would be expected from students in a 200 level course. In the future, we hope to develop a set of learning objectives that is scaffolded to 100, 200, 300 and 400 level courses.

Strat students, like Intro students, had their lowest scores in research methods (LO #3), tended to exceed expectations in demonstrating knowledge of the sociological imagination (LO #1), and tended to approach or meet expectations in the other LOs 2 and 4. Low scores in LO #3 are to be expected as most students have not yet completed a research methods course.

Assessment Process **How did you go about assessing student learning in your program?**

Currently our courses are assessed exclusively by reviewing term papers. In the future, we will consider broadening our assessment practices to include the use of before/after multiple choice exams and final exam essay questions.

__Actions Taken__

What action decisions did you make based on your data and conclusions? (Plan actions to take effect in the following semester or sooner if practical.)

Actions To Be Taken and By Whom	Timeframe for implementation and intermediate steps
Results to be communicated Sociology Department.	Fall 2015
Learning Objectives to be reviewed in terms of: A) Reviewing whether each objective is necessary, exhaustive and mutually exclusive, B) Developing a set of Learning Objectives scaffolded to 100, 200, 300 and 400 level courses.	Fall 2015
An assessment of writing ability is to be developed for all students in the first three weeks of Social Stratification. Additional assistance is to be provided for those students who score low on this exam.	Fall 2015
Model syllabi have been developed for all courses. All instructors are encouraged to communicate with each other in order to share ideas about "what works best." Models of best practices will be placed on the blackboard site.	Fall 2015

Appendix 1: Grading Rubrics
Rubric for Introduction to Sociology

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
1. Demonstrate through assignments and class discussion a sociological imagination, i.e., the ability to see connections between local, personal experiences and larger global, societal forces, and between individual troubles and pervasive social problems, in a global context.	The paper shows great insight in integrating theory and data. Personal experiences are perceptively used to illuminate important sociological concerns.	The paper adequately describes a personal experience and finds appropriate theory by which to analyze it.	Some gaps and inconsistencies in writing, grammar and logic obfuscate somewhat the link between theory and data, but the student is on the right track.	The paper shows a lack of understanding of the primary goals of sociology, and does not describe or apply theory in a way that provides insight into broad social structural forces.
2. Understand through readings and class discussion how the scientific study of society transcends common sense beliefs and conventional wisdom about people's attitudes and behaviors.	The student shows growth through their paper, poignantly demonstrating how theories and concepts from the course have brought them to a new and broader understanding of a personal experience.	The student shows promise in beginning to appreciate how sociological theories and concepts can provide an understanding of the social forces that drive personal experiences.	The student applies sociological theories and concepts in a perfunctory or haphazard manner	The student analyzes their personal experience in a way that does not apply or does not express understanding of sociological theories and concepts.
3. Test the veracity of research hypotheses and be able to formulate basic research questions to guide studies of societal behavior, processes, and institutions by using qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting evidence.	The student critiques and expands upon sociological concepts and theories through logic and the data as provided through a personal experience.	The student provides some indications that sociological concepts and theories do not simply stand alone, but are subject to question and scrutiny.	The student shows some evidence of beginning to question or build upon theory.	The student does not begin to question or problematize course concepts and theories in light of logic or questions posed by the personal experience.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with written works of classic and contemporary sociological theories that explain why people think and act as they do.	The student applies a rich, insightful application of theories in their discussion of data.	The student applies theories in an adequate, comprehensible way in analyzing their data.	The student's paper contains numerous gaps, omissions and missed opportunities in applying theory to data.	The student fails to apply theory to explain their personal experience.
5. Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of sociological concepts through writing, explanatory, and presentational skills.	The student provides an exemplary, insightful elucidation of theories from the course.	The student provides an adequate explanation of sociological theory.	The student's explanation of sociological theory shows some important gaps and omissions that interfere with comprehensibility.	The student demonstrates little knowledge or ability to explain sociological theories.

Rubric for Social Stratification

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
1. Demonstrate through assignments and class discussion a sociological imagination, i.e., the ability to see connections between local, personal experiences and larger global, societal forces, and between individual troubles and pervasive social problems, in a global context.	The paper shows great insight in understanding how forces that shape social inequality play out in their life. Personal experiences are perceptively used to illuminate how broad patterns of structural inequality effect us all.	The paper adequately describes a personal experience and shows how it might be understood in terms of theories that explain social inequality.	Some gaps and inconsistencies in writing, grammar and logic obfuscate somewhat the link between a student's experiences and broad patterns of inquality.	The paper shows a lack of understanding of structural inequality, and does not describe or apply a personal experience in a way brings light to social structural forces.
2. Understand through readings and class discussion how the scientific study of society transcends common sense beliefs and conventional wisdom about people's attitudes and behaviors.	The student shows growth through their paper, poignantly demonstrating how theories and concepts regarding structural inequality have brought them to a new and broader understanding of a personal experience.	The student shows promise in beginning to appreciate how a broad understanding of social inequality can help us explain our personal experiences.	The student applies an understanding of structural inequality in a perfunctory or haphazard manner	The student analyzes their personal experience in a way that does not apply or does not express an understanding of the theories that explain structural inequality.
3. Test the veracity of research hypotheses and be able to formulate basic research questions to guide studies of societal behavior, processes, and institutions by using qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting evidence.	The student critiques and expands upon theories of structural inequality through logic and the data as provided through a personal experience.	The student provides some indications that theories that explain social inequality do not simply stand alone, but are subject to question and scrutiny.	The student shows some evidence of beginning to question or expand upon theories of social inequality.	The student does not begin to question or problematize theories explaining structural inequality in light of logic or questions posed by the personal experience.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with written works of classic and contemporary sociological theories that explain why people think and act as they do.	The student applies a rich, insightful application of theories of structural inequality in their discussion of data.	The student applies theories of structural inequality in an adequate, comprehensible way in analyzing their data.	The student's paper contains numerous gaps, omissions and missed opportunities in applying an understanding of theories of social inequality in understanding their personal experience.	The student fails to apply theories of social inequality to explain their personal experience.
5. Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of sociological concepts through writing, explanatory, and presentational skills.	The student provides an exemplary, insightful elucidation of theories of social inequality from the course.	The student provides an adequate explanation of sociological understandings of social inequality.	The student's explanation of theories of inequality shows some important gaps and omissions that interfere with comprehensibility.	The student demonstrates little knowledge or ability to explain socially structured inequality.

Appendix 2: Course Learning Outcomes mapped on Sociology Major Learning Outcomes

LEARNING OUTCOMES	LO 1	LO 2	LO 3	LO 4	LO 5
COURSES – Working towards of the learning goals of the Sociology Major	Demonstrate through assignments and class discussion a sociological imagination, i.e., the ability to see connections between local, personal experiences and larger global, societal forces, and between individual troubles and pervasive social problems, in a global context.	Understand through readings and class discussion how the scientific study of society transcends common sense beliefs and conventional wisdom about people's attitudes and behaviors.	Test the veracity of research hypotheses and be able to formulate basic research questions to guide studies of societal behavior, processes, and institutions by using qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting evidence.	Demonstrate familiarity with written works of classic and contemporary sociological theories that explain why people think and act as they do.	Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of sociological concepts through writing, explanatory, and presentational skills.
Gateway Course SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology Learning Outcomes	1. be able to demonstrate knowledge of basic areas of study, terms, theories and concepts in sociology. 3. be able to apply the knowledge gained in order to make reasoned and informed judgments of current events and trends. 4. be able to demonstrate an ability to apply the theoretical, methodological and empirical knowledge gained in this course to reflect critically about vernacular and scientific interpretations and portrayals of the social world.	2. be able to demonstrate knowledge of how sociological knowledge is advanced through methodological practices.	2. be able to demonstrate knowledge of how sociological knowledge is advanced through methodological practices.	1. be able to demonstrate knowledge of basic areas of study, terms, theories and concepts in sociology. 3. be able to apply the knowledge gained in order to make reasoned and informed judgments of current events and trends.	4. be able to demonstrate an ability to apply the theoretical, methodological and empirical knowledge gained in this course to reflect critically about vernacular and scientific interpretations and portrayals of the social world.

PART I: Core Courses **SOC 232: Social Stratification**	1. demonstrate a knowledge of key terms and theories in social stratification, including social mobility, social reproduction, social capital, etc., as well as how stratification appears in the contemporary United States.	1. demonstrate a knowledge of key terms and theories in social stratification, including social mobility, social reproduction, social capital, etc., as well as how stratification appears in the contemporary United States.	3. understand the ways we measure and display data concerning social inequality.	2. demonstrate knowledge of how social inequality has been established and maintained in the United States along lines of race and gender.	2. demonstrate knowledge of how social inequality has been established and maintained in the United States along lines of race and gender. 4. be able to apply the terms, methods and theories of social stratification to qualitative or quantitative data.

Learning Outcomes for SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. be able to demonstrate knowledge of basic areas of study, terms, theories and concepts in sociology.
2. be able to demonstrate knowledge of how sociological knowledge is advanced through methodological practices.
3. be able to apply the knowledge gained in order to make reasoned and informed judgments of current events and trends.
4. be able to demonstrate an ability to apply the theoretical, methodological and empirical knowledge gained in this course to reflect critically about vernacular and scientific interpretations and portrayals of the social world.

Learning Outcomes for SOC 232: Social Stratification

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. demonstrate a knowledge of key terms and theories in social stratification, including social mobility, social reproduction, social capital, etc., as well as how stratification appears in the contemporary United States.
2. demonstrate knowledge of how social inequality has been established and maintained in the United States along lines of race and gender.
3. understand the ways we measure and display data concerning social inequality.
4. be able to apply the terms, methods and theories of social stratification to qualitative or quantitative data.