

CAREER TRAINING FOR SOCIOLOGY MAJORS

Description and Purpose:

Based on recommendations from the external review (2012-13) of our undergraduate programs, which encouraged the Department to integrate career planning into the curriculum, the Undergraduate Committee has created a series of career modules that will be infused into required courses for our undergraduate major. The Undergraduate Committee recommends infusing career planning and preparation into the required courses for the major: Introduction to Sociology, Research Methods, and Senior Seminar. These career planning steps are here forth referred to as “Career Modules.” In addition to meeting the recommendations of the external reviewers, the Career Modules will provide resources to help students prepare for successful employment after graduation.

Implementation in Required Courses:

The following text describes the goals for each phase of implementation of the Career Modules for the Sociology major. This document is intended to help faculty and instructors understand the importance of implementation in each of the identified courses, and to provide ideas or recommendations to accomplish each goal. **This is not intended to restrict creativity-- certainly these goals can be accomplished in a variety of ways.** Rather, this is intended to provide simple ideas for ease and convenience. **Instructors should be able to readily identify in their syllabi how they are achieving these goals.**

In *Introduction to Sociology*, the goal is to introduce students to a variety of careers that can be pursued with an undergraduate degree in Sociology or Interdisciplinary Social Sciences (ISS), and to introduce students (majors and non-majors) to the relevancy of sociology to a variety of careers across academic disciplines.

While there are several options listed below, we strongly encourage instructors of Introduction to Sociology to utilize the services provided by Career Services to achieve these goals. We want to ensure that all of our students, upon completion of Introduction to Sociology, are aware of the services provided by Career Services. A helpful link that should be provided to ALL Introduction to Sociology students is “USF Career Service’s All Majors List & Career Related Information” which can be found at <http://www.usf.edu/career-services/students/wcidwami-sociology.aspx>. The Undergraduate Committee is currently working with Career Services to develop career module resources for online sections. In the meantime, providing links and instructions for using Career Services would be a helpful tool for accomplishing this goal.

Sample Assignments for Introduction to Sociology:

- In class, show students how to access ASA's web page at <https://www.asanet.org>. Ask students to review this page at home, and in one page, answer the following questions:
 - Does it sound like courses in sociology might help you achieve your career goals?
 - Scroll down to the "Sections" link and enter that page. Look at the current sections of the American Sociological Association. Which three sound the most interesting to you? Click on the three that you selected and read their mission statements. Can you think of ways to apply the interests of these sections to a job you might envision yourself doing? (As an example, if you want to become an elementary school teacher, and you notice that the gender section seems interesting to you, how might you apply the mission statement from that section to your own career goals?)
- Ask a representative from Career Services to come to your class and discuss the services they offer as well as jobs available to graduates with an undergraduate degree in sociology, and how sociology courses can lead to improved employment possibilities in a variety of disciplines. [Please note: in order to have a Career Service representative visit your class, it is necessary to request their services online approximately 2 weeks in advance of a presentation date. The request form is available online on the Career Service's website.] Advise students to take notes on jobs that sound interesting. As a homework assignment, ask students to go online to job seeking websites (Monster.com, for instance) and search to see what kinds of jobs use the skills that they will obtain in a sociology program. Ask students to select a specific job, and explain how sociology is relevant to their job selection. Ask them to report their findings in a short paper or discussion board posting.
- Use the ASA Booklet "21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology" (these are available in the main Sociology office). Divide students into groups in class and bring enough pamphlets so that there is one per group. Ask students to explore the booklet and take notes. Follow with a large group discussion about the information they found interesting, and how this information might be helpful to them in their career pursuit. (NOTE: The department has to pay for these booklets, so please use them sparingly-- for an activity like this, they could be collected after class and reused). [Also, or alternatively, you could provide your students with the link for the website "What Can I Do With This Major?" instead of the ASA pamphlet (<http://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/sociology/>) to explore career options available with a degree in sociology. Modify the remaining instructions for assignments to suit this context.]
- As a homework assignment, ask students to use the internet to identify and research successful people who have Bachelor's degrees in Sociology and write about their findings. These people need not be "famous sociologists," but rather, politicians, human rights leaders, CEOs, or other public figures. In the following class, discuss students' findings in a large group discussion. What type of careers did these individuals achieve? How do you think that sociological skills help them at their work?

In **Research Methods**, the goal is to help students recognize how sociological research skills will be applicable to various employment prospects.

Sample Assignments for Research Methods:

- Ask students to design a career field specific research project using one or each of the methodologies discussed in the course (such as experiments, document analysis, surveys, interviews, and observations). For instance, students who intend on working in fields such as education, social services, healthcare, business, human resources, criminal justice, public health, non-profit management etc., would design a research project applicable to that field. We have provided some examples for survey design and document analysis. Instructors may create similar example assignments for other methods that they include in their course content, with the goal of making explicit the notion that these research methods are marketable job skills.

If you are studying survey design:

- your students who are interested in a human resource career might design an employee satisfaction survey.
- your students who are interested in a higher education career might design a college graduate satisfaction survey (e.g. an exit survey).

If you are studying document analysis:

- your students who are interested in a criminal justice career might conduct a document analysis of media reports pertaining to cases where the “stand your ground” law has been invoked.
 - your students who are interested in non-profit management might conduct a document analysis of a local agency’s website (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters). They could then compare and contrast that site with parallel agencies’ websites across the nation to identify strengths and weaknesses in the local agency’s public presentation.
- Provide students with the “practical” skills that most organizations seek in their employees (reading data tables, constructing data tables, evaluating research, etc.). Have students choose an organization in which they may be interested in seeking employment. Using the internet, ask students to find data provided by that organization (arrest rates, graduation rates, hospital wait times, etc.) and arrange that data into an understandable table or chart which could be presented to the employer. Students could present the data table or chart to the class or a small group, and the class or group could work together to discern the meaning and importance of the data. In groups, students then could create a written description of data contained in the table or chart.

In **Senior Seminar**, the *goal is to prepare for the future*. This could include a professional career and/or graduate school.

Sample Assignments for Senior Seminar:

- Schedule Daneen Whatley from the Career Services to come to your class and offer a workshop on (1) constructing coherent and effective resumes; (2) writing a cover letter; (3) interviewing for a job.
 - For students interested in entering a career upon graduation, have these students complete this assignment: Find an announcement for a job/career position that is directly and clearly related to a social science discipline (or a liberal arts degree), and for which you could actually apply (in the newspaper, ASA or other job bulletin, websites, government job ads or descriptions, placement office, career center, etc.). Copy the job ad or announcement and include it with a custom cover letter and your 1-2 page customized resume. The cover letter should discuss the following: expectations of the job (those explicitly stated and any others you think are accurate but not stated), how your general education and training as a sociologist would fit or make you a good candidate for the position, what specific skills you have acquired in college generally, and in sociology specifically, that relate to the position, and any other experiences or benefits you would bring to the job. The resume should be tailored to you, that job, and the skills you have obtained in your sociology program.
- Schedule Daneen Whatley (Career Services representative for Sociology) to present a session on Informational Interviewing. This is an excellent presentation and provides students with an important skill that greatly enhances their career opportunities.
- Schedule a group of funded M.A. students (and perhaps a couple of PhD students) to be part of a panel discussion during one of your class periods. In preparation for this class have students read materials like: “What is Graduate School Like?” (<http://gradschool.about.com/cs/transitions/a/like.htm>) or other similar materials. Have the MA panel discuss their experiences in graduate school and answer student questions (there will be many).
 - For students interested in entering graduate school, have these students complete this assignment: (1) Research various graduate programs and chose two that are of most interest to you. Study the materials posted on their website and write a summary of each program (focus, specialty areas, requirements, etc.) and in that summary include a discussion of “why” the particular program is of interest to you. (2) Email the Director of the two graduate programs you have chosen.. In your communication, specify why you are interested in the particular program and ask the Director two-three questions about the

program that you were not able to ascertain from their web site. (3) Develop a well-written personal statement (2-4 pages) that would go to the admissions committee of the school if you were actually applying. Students will need information on how to write a personal statement (materials from the Dartmouth Writing Program, which are available online have been helpful to them). Also helpful is to provide them with models of well-written personal statements.

- The USF undergraduate sociology curriculum is designed to nurture students' abilities to evaluate research reports and the claims they make. Assignments in Senior Seminar can be developed to help students directly apply those skills by writing a critical evaluation of a specific research report. The assignment developed should have at least two purposes: to encourage students to develop skills to comprehend and evaluate research published by others, and to encourage students to develop skills to write their own arguments. An example of an assignment that might accomplish this goal is:
 - Using the document "Criteria for Evaluating Research Reports" (available from previous Senior Seminar Instructors), have students employ their analytic and critical thinking skills in a written assignment by applying the criteria to a research article provided to them. It is helpful to first apply the criteria to several other research articles during an in-class discussion before distributing this assignment.