

SOCIOLOGY PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW
ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP REPORT

The Department of Sociology submits this report in accordance with Ryerson Policy 126, Section 12. This report outlines the recommendations included in the Implementation Plan (p.66-69 of the Sociology Period Program Review Self-Study), and explains the work done to address these recommendations. We also review the learning outcomes of the BA Sociology program.

Recommendations and Current Status

1 - Embed experiential learning further in curriculum and enhance student opportunities for professional development and career focus.

In the Winter 2018 term, Sociology students took part in the career-focused pilot course. This course was then offered for the first time as a credit course in Winter 2019 as SSH 500. This course was oriented around career goals and job search practices, helping students to develop a sense of direction and initiative through self-reflection, career search self-assessment, work on resumes, practice interviews and other activities. Students took part in a job shadow experience in an establishment aligned with their career goals, observing the work routines and having conversations with employees about the nature of the work, how jobs in the field are filled. The enrollment for the course was 26, 22 of whom were Sociology program students. This course will be offered again in the Winter 2020 term. Based on the positive student feedback, we expect the demand for this course to grow significantly in the coming years.

As we introduce new courses, particularly our new 4th year seminar courses, we are including specific language indicating experiential components. The work of embedding experiential learning into existing courses is ongoing. In addition, the Sociology Department has started to provide faculty members with additional resources to support the work of developing and implementing experiential learning components of a course. These funds have been used for additional TA hours and RA support, but may be used for other relevant needs. In 2018-19, four faculty members accessed this support.

2 – Deepen the transformative equity focus in the department by Indigenizing and decolonizing the Sociology Curriculum, increasing the variety of equity-oriented courses and strengthening processes for raising equity-oriented concerns in the department

The work of Indigenizing and decolonizing the Sociology curriculum includes developments in course design, pedagogy and content. In the past year, Drs. Julie Tomiak and Damien Lee have met with the Curriculum Committee on two occasions to discuss possibilities related to Indigenous-focused course and program development. Based on these conversations, the Department Council approved an upper-year course entitled Special Topics in Indigenous Studies. While further curricular changes are planned, it was decided that these discussion should be postponed in order to include the perspectives of the three new Indigenous faculty members who

will join the department on July 1, 2019. These faculty members bring knowledge and perspectives that will not only inform new course development, but will bring Indigenous perspectives into all aspects of the Sociology curriculum, including pilot projects in land or place-based pedagogy.

We are also developing more focussed and intensive equity-oriented courses to complement the broader and more introductory character of many of our courses in this area. Dr. Mélanie Knight developed a new course, called “Blackness and Freedom” (SOC 530). This course was approved in the Fall 2018 term, and will be taught in the Fall 2019 term. In addition, the department has undertaken discussions to develop additional sociology courses with an equity and decolonizing focus.

We also continue to support the Caribbean Studies courses. To support the Caribbean studies focus of the department, the department undertook a search for a Caribbean studies scholar. As this was a failed search, it is the expectation that the position will be re-posted this fall.

3 – Provide program students with a wider variety of substantive courses covering exciting sociological topics

To allow students greater variety of substantive courses, the Sociology Department has loosened its restriction on Sociology program students taking Liberal Studies sociology courses. Beginning in the Fall 2018 term, students are now permitted to take up to two upper-level Liberal Studies sociology courses, and count them as part of their Table II requirements. This change has been met with widespread support from students, who are eager to have access to courses such as Sociology of Sport, Sociology of Food and Eating, and Women and Islam. A very small number of students have accidentally enrolled in more than two UL sociology courses. While these cases have been addressed individually, the Undergraduate Program Director and Undergraduate Program Administrator are developing strategies to help educate students about the restriction.

The department also continues to develop more elective courses offered as Table II courses. For example, SOC 530 (Blackness and Freedom) and the new Special Topics in Indigenous Studies courses will both be offered as Table II courses. In addition, the department is developing new courses as part of the revised 4th year curriculum (see below).

4 – Smaller seminar courses offer the possibility of integrative learning in which students draw on their theoretical and methodological preparation to investigate pressing social issues through a sociological lens. We will explore possibilities for students to be exposed to more integrative learning through the exploration of substantive issues.

The department has developed a proposal to modify the fourth year of the program by adding one additional required course. Specifically, students will take SOC 490 *and* one additional fourth year course. The additional required course will be selected from among 4 options. This additional required course will replace one of the required Table II courses, resulting in no change to the number of SOC courses that students require to complete their program. Each of the fourth-year

course options would ideally be capped at 40 students, distinguishing these courses from other sociology electives.

The four options for the courses are: (1) Making Social Change; (2) Career Integration; (3) Current Social Issue Focus; and (4) Independent Sociological Analysis. Students who are interested in a traditional focused seminar course can take Current Social Issue Focus. Our students with a strong interest in social activism and social justice may elect to take Making Social Change. Students who are pursuing a career directly from their BA Sociology program will likely take an interest in the Career Integration course. Finally, students who wish to develop their own sociological analysis around a specific question or experience can fulfill their fourth year requirement through the Independent Sociological Analysis.

The Sociology Department Council approved this plan on April 9, 2019. We are now in the final stages of consultation on the plan for submission to the Academic Standards Committee by June 28, 2019.

5 – The development of a graduate program in Transformative Social Research to enhance the research profile of the department and offer new forms of seminar-based learning for senior undergraduate students.

Actions:

The Letter of Intent (LOI) for our proposed graduate program in Transformative Social Research has been approved. The next phase is for the Department to turn this into a full proposal ready to go through the stages of the formal approval process. The proposed program complements strengths of the undergraduate program, with its focus on experiential learning, effective research practices and equity. The goal will be to have the full proposal completed by the end of Fall 2019 so it can go through formal processes in Winter 2020. The Department will also have time for serious strategic discussions early in the Fall to address important issues raised by the UPO concerning access to resources for new programs.

Program Learning Outcomes

The program learning outcomes listed in the Sociology Periodic Program Review (p. 9-10) are as follows:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of classical and contemporary sociological theories and related interdisciplinary perspectives and debates. This includes the relationship between theory and lived experience, social processes and social problems, power and inequality, and movements for transformative social change.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the socio-historical and global context of contemporary social relations and knowledge production, including ways in which
 - a) structural inequalities and social injustice are manifested in individual and group identities; and

- b) social injustice, inequalities and identities have been legitimated, normalized, and institutionalized over time.
 - c) people individually and collectively resist discrimination and inequality.
3. Critically read, interpret, assess, conduct and evaluate research methods and methodologies, while demonstrating an informed knowledge and respect for epistemological and ethical issues. Students receive training in
 - a) research design and data collection using methods such as survey design, standard qualitative interviews, focus group interviews, narrative analysis and media analysis;
 - b) data analysis using approaches such as content and discourse analysis, comparative and historical analysis, semiotics, statistical description and inference.
 4. Demonstrate reflexivity as a sociologist; specifically, an awareness and comprehension of one's own location in society as well as the different subject positions of the many individuals that make up our diverse society. Implicit in this process is an ongoing critical skepticism and awareness of the production, and the limits of knowledge.
 5. Exhibit effective communication skills in a variety of formats, including essay writing and oral presentations; demonstrate a facility with words and numerical language as well as the ability to debate cogently, discuss and exchange ideas.
 6. Demonstrate an ability to understand and critically interpret a wide range of texts in a variety of media, including both scholarly and popular writings.
 7. Demonstrate social engagement by bridging academic thought and research in relation to practical challenges, policies and strategic organization in local, national and global communities and forums. Express the intellectual breadth to allow sociology specialists to explore new perspectives on identities, social relationships and the organization of social institutions.

These learning outcomes were formed through active collaboration and input by faculty and students in the department. The program reviewers stated "these learning outcomes are very clear while at the same time being quite detailed and specific" (p.6). Further, they note that seven of the learning outcomes align with Ryerson's four principle priorities, and five of the learning outcomes align with the Faculty of Arts strategic plan. Finally, it is noted that the program requirements and learning outcomes encompass six Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLEs) for Ryerson University.

These learning outcomes remain central to the curricular changes and strategic priorities of the department, and are the foundation for changes made (or currently in progress). The changes outlined in this document have only strengthened the capacity of our program to address each of these learning outcomes. No further refinement of these learning outcomes is needed at this time.