

**Fitchburg State University  
Program Review  
Prepared by Kim MacInnis  
October 21, 2020**

## **Introduction**

Dr. Zachary Miner, a Sociology Professor, provided me with all of the documents needed for the review. The program review was virtual given the state of the Covid-19 pandemic. Zoom meetings were scheduled with the Dean, the Provost, faculty, students, librarians, and staff. One important document reviewed was a self-study from 2020 providing an overview of the department, its vision, mission and objectives. A unique aspect of the Sociology program (Behavioral Sciences) is that it is situated in the same department as Criminal Justice and Human Services. There is one chairperson for these programs. The self-study also included student trends in enrollment, student learning objectives, campus resources, number of faculty and their responsibilities. Curriculum development was an important component of the study as there had been changes from the last self-study in 2015 and the department hoped for further changes to restructure the program. The challenges faced by the department include the workload to faculty ratio, restructuring the program with four faculty members, developing concentrations, a capstone, advancing agreed upon changes to the program and forging a unique identity.

### **I. Summary of Visit**

The review team consisted of one external reviewer. The reviewer met with faculty, administrators, staff, librarians and students via Zoom. All were eager to discuss challenges and changes to the department and in particular, develop possibilities and strategies as it moves forward in implementing change. Faculty expressed the need to provide Sociology students with a sophisticated program and advance with numerous changes. Faculty seem overworked and did not demonstrate a lot of faith there would be timely changes to the program. Although the department welcomes students from all majors into their introductory courses, they wish to develop a unique Sociological identity. There are numerous recommendations for the program, particularly restructuring the curriculum, developing a capstone (eliminating Social Theory as the present capstone) for graduating seniors that entails a sophisticated research project.

### **II. Mission Statement**

“The mission of the Sociology Program at Fitchburg State University is to prepare students for civic engagement in our globalized society. We provide students with the tools for understanding the dynamics of social interactions, the effects of inequality and other social problems, and how social structures shape behavior in society”.

The mission statement of the Sociology program is far too brief. In particular, the program should include the “sociological imagination”, a key concept in the discipline.

**Recommendation 1:** The Sociology program should expand its mission statement by including the “sociological imagination” as well as the manner in which Sociology gives students the ability to understand how individual and group behavior is shaped by historical and social forces; and related to broader social structures, including global ones; and how to work towards resolving issues of exclusion and inequality and to move towards social justice. This would give the program a specific identity as part of its mission statement.

### **III. Program Framework**

The Sociology program is situated within a department shared by two other disciplines, Criminal Justice and Human Services and is synonymous with “Behavioral Sciences, even though it’s a social science. There are four full-time faculty members (two senior and two junior) and no part-time faculty at this time. There are approximately 38 Sociology majors. One faculty member serves as the program coordinator. Sociology appreciates residing in the department with two additional disciplines as they value the accompaniment of Criminal Justice and Human Services given there are interlocking interests that aid in the development of new courses or the evaluation of courses. The Sociology program is somewhat perceived as a service program since numerous majors require Introduction to Sociology as part of their programs. Additionally, some majors require additional Sociology courses from a wide variety of subjects. The Sociology program offers a plethora of courses but given its four- faculty program, they are not offered as frequently as faculty wishes. While faculty acknowledges its value, they do not wish to be perceived as a service program. Sociology faculty work hard to develop a structured and unique program. Faculty developed five learning objectives for the program, and they are in line with the mission of the School of Arts and Sciences and the American Sociological Association. They are:

- Students will be able to understand key sociological concepts
- Students will be able to communicate sociological concepts effectively through the use of writing and/or oral skills
- Students will be able to think critically about social issues and social theories
- Students will be able to apply sociology to social life
- Students will develop appropriate skills for conducting sociological research

As presented in the self-study, it was difficult to assess the objectives given the number of responses to the survey. Since so many non-majors enroll in introductory courses, it was advised that Introduction to Sociology courses not be assessed in terms of learning. It does appear that there was an improvement in the number of students learning to think critically about sociological issues. However, Student Learning Outcome assessment overall demonstrates the need to revise the curriculum, in some areas, specific courses where students did not produce quality work. Only one student did an honor’s thesis, albeit successful. There does not appear to be enough writing, especially in upper-level, required

courses. There is also a sequencing problem. In the 2015 self-study, changes to the curriculum were made and one such is as follows:

“Our Introduction to Sociology course is the required “gateway” pre-requisite to all subsequent sociology courses. Beyond that, students must take applied statistics before they can take our quantitative methods course, and our quantitative methodology course must be completed prior to taking Social Theory. This progression has proved effective for our students in meeting this Recommendation”.

It’s not clear how effectiveness was measure since Introduction to Sociology was not part of the assessment. Social Theory is sequenced after Research Methods and Research Methods is split into two classes- qualitative and quantitative. These upper-level courses seem to reflect the SLOs for the most part, but course sequencing is still a concern.

**Recommendation 2:** Social Theory should be a writing intensive course and completed before Research Methods in order to give students a strong theoretical foundation for research. Social Theory should not be used as a Capstone given its limited research and writing components. A capstone should entail research and Social Theory does not require in-depth research. As it stands, some sections of Social Theory do not even require a lengthy paper. The rubric accompanying Social Theory has no merit given a writing component is not consistent. Research Methods should be a combination of qualitative and quantitative teaching, especially since applied statistics is a prerequisite, thus eliminating a course for the majors. This easily makes room for a capstone.

**Recommendation 3:** Rubrics associated with Social Theory and Research Methods could be shared among faculty making for a smoother transition to upper level courses and ensuring that all sections of Social Theory require an adequate writing component.

**Recommendation 4:** Students should be required to take any 200 level Sociology courses before segueing immediately to high level courses such as Social Theory.

Faculty teach both introductory and core courses for the major. Introduction to Sociology is a service course and the program offers 17 sections every year. Majors are required to take four required courses and any additional eight courses. Faculty expressed that the program does not look as appealing as other majors because it appears too lax given the eight elective course requirements. Students can take any eight electives but there is no structure regarding elective choices. There was an expressed need for concentrations, namely, “Social Justice” and “Medical Sociology” and for a capstone course to establish substance and identity to the program. There is concern about having enough faculty members to teach capstone courses (and its minimum enrollment) and develop and cover concentration courses. Regarding Medical Sociology, there appears to be only one faculty member specializing in that area. Upon retirement, this concentration may not be realistic. Developing a Social Justice concentration first would aid in evaluating interests among students regarding concentrations. Faculty believe a new faculty line would assuage these

course and curriculum concerns. There appears to be obstacles to concentration and capstone advances and some faculty members are clearly overworked.

Requiring an intermediate level Foreign Language as part of the BA degree in Sociology is very impressive and adds to the sophistication of the major, despite the fact that most students graduate with a BS in Sociology.

**Recommendation 5:** Similar to recommendation two, the Sociology program needs to be restructured in terms of course offerings. In addition to developing concentrations (**see Appendix A**), the department should consider categorizing the eight electives into two or three categories. Students would then be required to choose one or two courses from particular categories (**see Appendix B**). In order to gauge success, it is recommended that at least one concentration be developed from courses already offered in the program. Furthermore, it might make sense to poll majors as to their thoughts on developing concentrations. In order to ensure the restructuring of the entire Sociology program, an additional full-time faculty member is recommended given the number of Introduction to Sociology sections, the high number of non-majors required to take Introduction to Sociology, and the development of a concentration and a capstone.

**Recommendation 6:** The Sociology program needs a capstone for their graduating seniors. Currently, Social Theory is being used as a capstone and this is inappropriate given the reason for using it as a capstone- it's situated as the highest level of courses. A capstone that focuses on research and theory would add legitimacy to the program as well as allowing faculty the opportunity to do research with students. One option is to use its internship program for a capstone with a research paper requirement. This would be a relatively easy transition given the number of internship placement sites. The internship rubric is already impressive so adding a research paper requirement is not unreasonable. A capstone class is ideal. Should the program decide to combine Research Methods sections into one section, a capstone class would not add additional credits to the program (**see Appendix C**).

**Recommendation 7:** The overhaul of the program should be comprehensive, not piecemeal in order to create a better program and a stand-out identity as a sophisticated discipline. All faculty members should equally participate in this transformation in order to ensure its success. A capstone course should be implemented immediately. If internships are used as capstones, faculty would have to supervise students. Given the amount of work to be completed, an additional faculty line is recommended.

The Sociology program has ties with the surrounding community. Dr. Arend and Dr. Miner have joined the Crocker Center's Community Research and Consulting Group to aid in solving issues relevant to the local community. This partnership is valuable for both the community and Fitchburg State University. Faculty can share their expertise on issues and the center can offer insight from a more consulting perspective. Given the growing partnership of Sociology with corporations, this will be a valuable duet for students, faculty

and community members. Additionally, students may have the opportunity to participate in internships in the community.

#### **IV Faculty and Staff**

There are four full time faculty members, three males and one female. Faculty seem to work well together for the most part but there are concerns about workload dissemination. This may be attributed to a traditional versus non-traditional approach to teaching and participating in program development. Faculty agree that the curriculum should be restructured, and all liked the idea of developing concentrations and capstones. Additionally, faculty would like to see proposed changes advance in a timely manner. They believe their students deserve a great program and as it stands it is perceived more as a service program.

Upon review of the syllabi, it is clear that faculty offer interesting classes and include learning outcomes on all syllabi. Most syllabi are comprehensive and clear. There are some campus resources included on the syllabi for student achievement.

**Recommendation 8:** All campus resources should be included on syllabi such as the Title IX Office, Health Center, Tutor Center, Library Resources and the Writing Center.

Faculty do not want the program to be perceived as a service program, so developing a strong identity is important to them, especially since they are one of three programs in the department. They like working in an interdisciplinary setting as they believe this enhances critical thinking for themselves and their students. As stated previously, developing concentrations is welcomed among faculty and they appreciate input from the other disciplines. At times faculty teach in areas not necessarily their own and this takes an enormous amount of work thus affects time for scholarly work, working with students, developing concentrations and capstones, and creates a significantly frustrating work/life balance. When faculty attempt to discuss changes to the curriculum and move forward, curriculum related discussions are often tabled. Additionally, there are concerns should when one faculty member retires, there will not be a replacement, resulting in the program losing its identity altogether.

Scholarly work in the department relates directly to the discipline, particularly the most up-to-date work. Gun violence, in particular, is timely given the state of the nation at this time. Gender, always an important issue, is well represented as it relates to weddings, inequality, race and much more. These scholarly works undoubtedly draw student interest.

There was a brief discussion of raising the major GPA from 2.0 to 2.5 in order to lend more legitimacy to the program. Faculty consistently voiced the concern that Sociology as a discipline is not taken seriously by students on campus. Revamping the curriculum and raising the GPA is a consideration.

Faculty scholarship is supported by the Chairperson and faculty members have attended numerous conferences in order to expand their areas of expertise or to familiarize themselves with new areas of interest. Faculty work very well with the administrative assistant in the department. She works with faculty from all three programs and very much enjoys her work.

Faculty have a heavy advising load for four faculty members (approximately 33 each). The program has 38 majors, but faculty is also responsible for advising criminal justice majors. Faculty are not fully acquainted with the criminal justice program and consider this cumbersome.

**Recommendation 9:** Workload concerns should be discussed with the chairperson to avoid burn-out for those with heavier workloads, including high numbers of advisees. This conversation should include how to dispense of departmental work as well as discussing the avoidance of tabling curriculum changes or changes related to the program in general. The benefits of raising the GPA should be considered given that other majors on campus require 2.5 GPAs.

**Recommendation 10:** Given the workload, including creating courses not in one's area of expertise, heavy advising load, and lack of sufficient time for scholarship and developing concentrations and a capstone, a faculty line is strongly recommended in order for the program to advance in an academically sophisticated manner.

**Recommendation 11:** Upon approval of changes, marketing the new program is initially simple. The program could begin by sending an all campus email to faculty and students introducing the revised program. The website should be re-designed to showcase faculty and students and student learning objectives should be on the website. Faculty bios and headshots work well. The website should contain information on careers in Sociology (not just list them) and a section on "FAQs" regarding the major and minor. On page 9, the Essential Concepts of Sociology section is missing the "sociological imagination", a key component of the discipline and globalization should be included as a concept.

**Recommendation 12:** The consideration of a Sociology club with majors and minors would give the program campus presence. A faculty member could reach out to one or two majors to begin this process. Another mode to attract majors would be to include the Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) in the program. This is a very prestigious International Sociology Honor Society that "promotes excellence in the scholarship in the study of social problems, sociology, and intellectual activities that lead to the improvement in the human condition". <https://alphakappadelta.org/become-a-member/> This membership is quite an honor for majors and minors, and it is suitable for resume inclusion. Staff could assist with this development.

The program has very dedicated faculty and faculty that are very concerned about offering students a sophisticated program. Faculty are well versed in their areas of expertise,

although some areas of study need updating. There does seem to be a bit of a schism regarding the speed in which the program should advance.

## **V. Chairperson and Administration**

The chairperson is in her 7th year. She is very supportive of faculty in the Sociology program and understands its challenges. She is very transparent and agrees that there should be changes made to the structure of the Sociology program. Faculty think very highly of the chairperson and work well with her. The need to have more meetings with the chairperson during the year was expressed in the context of moving agreed upon program changes to the next level. The chairperson believes they handled the move to online/hybrid courses very well but understood that the “new normal” can be stressful for faculty and students.

The chairperson agrees with the changes voiced by Sociology faculty- that a total restructuring of the program is necessary. She believes its perception is one of a service program, since Introduction to Sociology is required for many majors on campus. She believes courses already exist in the Sociology program to launch at least one concentration. She agrees the program needs a capstone.

**Recommendation 13:** Although the chairperson supervises three programs in the department, Sociology faculty expressed the need to meet on a regular basis. They hold her in high regard and believe she will aid in pushing agreed upon changes forward.

## **VI Students**

Students can graduate with a BA in Sociology or a BS in Sociology. Most students graduate with a BS in Sociology. From 2015- 2019, trends in enrollment for Sociology courses are mostly steady. Introduction to Sociology has the highest rate of enrollment among Sociology courses. In fact, 43 percent of the most recent graduates took Introduction to Sociology during their college career. Additional Sociology classes are cognates for other majors and minors.

The current number of majors is 38 and minors, 34. The number of majors remain steady as do the number of minors save for AY 2017.

Females outnumber males as majors, 26 to 10 – a general trend that has been true for several years. The student body continues to be diverse, with half of the majors identifying as some race other than White. Current majors are made up of 18 White students, 12 African-American students, 5 Hispanic students, and 1 student of more than one race.

It is difficult to determine whether or not student scholarship seems adequate since student work was not available for viewing. However, based on the assessment report, it

would be difficult to determine overall student success given the limitations of the assessment.

**Recommendation 14:** A capstone course should be used in order to evaluate scholarship during any assessment process. Additionally, during the advising process in the senior year, conducting an exit interview with majors would aid in gauging the success and perception of the program. Online outreach to majors may be successful by offering flex points to students who participate.

The reviewer met with three students; all Sociology minors. Two students major in Human Services and one in Criminal Justice. Given the pandemic, it was difficult to draw additional students. Speaking to some majors would have been valuable for the review. However, two of the minors regretted not majoring in Sociology. All three were seniors and would have liked to have taken more Sociology courses as they believed they related more to “real life” than other courses being taken. One minor intends to apply to graduate school for a Masters in Sociology. They all adjusted well to moving online, although one student just doesn’t like online classes.

All three students had no general complaints about Sociology faculty. One specific complaint was that a faculty member showed too many films or videos in class. The students believed they weren’t learning as much as they could and would have like to connect the films to actual Sociological theory. It was expressed that some courses are “stale.”

All three students believe the Sociology program is incredibly interesting but does have a reputation of being “easy” in terms of academia.

All three students like the idea of a capstone whether that be a class, an internship or an honors thesis. They also had no issues with raising the GPA to 2.5 in the major. A general comment was that all students should be working hard to get high grades. One student stated that the increase in GPA would help make the program at least appear more sophisticated and that it is not an unreasonable increase. All three liked the idea of an association with AKD.

As far as program resources, one student commented that the tutoring center does not offer tutoring in Sociology. This is not unusual. They understood that given the pandemic, there were no tutors available at this time. Also, students expressed the need for an updated website. They found it hard to navigate the Sociology website and stated it lacked broad information about Sociology.

**Recommendation 15:** Sociology faculty should try to make time to meet with Sociology majors in order to receive input about concentrations, a capstone and a higher GPA. As busy as they are, it might be a good idea to have an informal gathering in person or online with their majors and minors.

## **VII Library Resources for Sociology**

The campus library contains a significant number of resources for faculty and students in the Sociology program. There are over 180,000 printed books and over 400,000 e-books. The number of e-books checked out of the library is very high. There are approximately 1800 streaming films available for faculty and students. Both librarians are incredibly supportive of all programs and wish to develop a close relationship with the Sociology program throughout a four- year degree. They are willing to work with Sociology majors and minors to teach them how to research topics and analyze them. Both librarians voice the concern that students (all students) are not well-equipped to perform research when they arrive at Fitchburg. Their willingness to help students directly is incredibly valuable for every program, but Sociology is unique in some aspects. For instance, there are a lot of oral histories available related to Sociology in the library. They are interested in teaching research per discipline and have already implemented library links within Blackboard for every Sociology course. The links are accompanied by guides. Both librarians strongly agreed that the Sociology program needs a capstone in order to be furthered defined as a scholarly discipline. Both librarians are eager to work with the program on developing a capstone as well as developing concentrations.

Both librarians want to promote more library usage. They see fewer students because of the pandemic but the use of the “chat” option is working well in terms of student reaching out for help. This past year, there is an 82 percent increase of students using “chat”. Both librarians are considerable assets to the Sociology program.

## **VIII Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Sociology Program is an impressive program given its four faculty members and the amount of work expected to run a department and develop and maintain a sophisticated curriculum. It is evident that all faculty wish to raise the level of academic achievement with the development of concentrations and an appropriate capstone course. Faculty appreciate working with Criminal Justice and Human Service faculty regarding curriculum development but wish to establish their own identity. While faculty value hundreds of non-majors enrolling in their courses, whether they are cognate or required, they believe the Sociology program is generally perceived as a service program. It seems that crafting a more structured program is an ideal solution to eliminate this perception. This is supported by the chairperson and upper administrators. Although only three students were interviewed, all of them spoke highly of the major but believe it needs more structure in order for it to be perceived as academically sophisticated and appropriately challenging. Much work will have to be done in relation to developing concentrations and a capstone course and as it stands, four faculty are insufficient, and some are overworked. Advancements in curriculum are tabled too frequently which indicates that another faculty member would be an invaluable asset to ensure that the Sociology program creates its own identity as a revered discipline and much more than a service program.

Appendices have been added to this review to serve as examples for change. They are simply ideas for guidance. The Sociology program has incredible potential for becoming a much more sophisticated program, but overall change is necessary and not in a piecemeal manner. Some faculty members are clearly overworked and there needs to be more obvious support for program change advancement. In order for change to be comprehensive and in order for the program to present its own identity as a sophisticated discipline, an additional faculty member is strongly recommended.

## Appendices

### **Appendix A- Sample Concentration- Social Justice**

#### **Required Courses- (15 credits)**

SOC 1100 Introduction to Sociology

#### **Social Stratification or another course related to Social Justice**

SOC 3160 Seminar: Social Theory

SOC 3001 Seminar: Research Methods in Sociology

Seminar: Social Data Analysis

#### **Complete three courses from the following: (9 credits)**

SOC 2002 Poverty

SOC 2440 Urban Sociology

SOC 2500 Race and Ethnic Relations

SOC 2600 Sociology of Developing Societies

SOC 2700 Social Problems

SOC 2750 Criminology

SOC 2760 Juvenile Delinquency

SOC 3000 Social Stratification

SOC 3100 Gender and Society

SOC 3110 Sociology of Sexualities

**Complete one course from the following: (3 credits)**

SOC 2800 Sociology of Education

SOC 2650 Sociology of Organization

**Complete any two Sociology electives (6 credits)**

**Capstone - complete one of the following: (3 credits)**

Critical Issues in Sociology (new course- in class)

SOC 4960 Internship in Sociology

SOC 4901 Independent Study

**Appendix B**

**Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Combined**

Schutt, Russell K. 2017. Understanding the Social World: Research Methods for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Chambliss, Daniel F. and Schutt, Russell K. *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation*

Edwards, Mark, 2015. Writing in Sociology. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

**Appendix C- Sample Syllabi- Capstone**

This is a sample syllabus for online teaching due to the pandemic, but the general format is great and can easily be used in face-to-face classes.

**SOCI Critical Issues in Sociology- Capstone**

**Course Description**

The capstone course provides you with the opportunity to create a meaningful paper that showcases what you have learned at BSU. It is a chance for you to bring together the theories,

ideas, methods, and skills you have gained throughout your time here. The class is designed to be a workshop where we work together to advance one another's goals and skill sets.

**Course Outcomes**

By the end of the course, you will:

- Write a 20-25 page research paper on a topic of your choosing, based on original research
- Help others think through and pursue their own creative paper topics
- Present your work to the class

**Readings**

There are no assigned readings in the course though there are helpful documents on Blackboard.

Instead of assigned readings, you will be finding and reading academic articles related to your paper topic (You must use 10 peer reviewed articles PLUS an additional 2 articles or books or chapters). These will help guide your work and form the basis for your theoretical perspective and literature review. You may not use non-academic sources (websites) for this component of your paper. All work and analysis must be your own.

**Class Contributions and Discussion**

This course is designed as a workshop. Each week, every student will update us on his/her progress. We will ask questions, offer suggestions, and reflect back what we are hearing. As such, this is a discussion-oriented class. It goes without saying that you will speak every week. But you will not only discuss your work—you will discuss others' work as well. In this way, we will help each other. Your class contributions will be the questions/comments/suggestions you offer to other students.

Attendance is mandatory. You cannot contribute to the class when you are not here. Contributions/ attendance is worth 10 points of your grade and you will lose points as follows:

Absences	0	1	2	3	4
Grade	10	10	8	6	4 additional points each absence (yes, you can have a negative score)

**Zoom**

We will be meeting remotely every week using Zoom through your course Blackboard site. I will open the class just before 1:50 so we can start on time.

\*You need to make sure you are enrolled in the Blackboard site for this course.\* If you need help with this, please contact IT, ext. 2555, or [itsupport@bridgew.edu](mailto:itsupport@bridgew.edu).

A few guidelines about Zoom for this class:

1. You need to be visible/audible for the whole class. While I want to be accommodating of different perspectives and needs related to life online, this class is built around interaction; we need to be able to see each other and hear each other. Make sure your camera and microphone are on.
  - a. If you don't want people to see your "real life" background, feel free to use a Zoom background. They're easy to use, even though they can make movements a little jerky.
  - b. If you just don't want to, or can't, be seen for the course, there may be other capstone options available to you. You can talk to me about them.
2. I set up Zoom so that it *does not record* our sessions. Therefore, if you miss a class, just like an in-person class, you miss it.

### **The Paper**

Because we are remote, the only data collection method you will be able to use this term is content analysis. (Well, if you love statistics, you can use datasets, but speak to me about that.) You will be expected to turn in parts of the paper as we move through the semester but since everyone will be doing different projects with different components, these dates will be staggered and will be indicated in the workshop as we go along.

Papers will include nearly all components of a traditional sociology journal article: abstract, introduction, literature review (including theory), methods, data, discussion and/or conclusion section, bibliography, and appendices as needed. There is a rubric on Blackboard that details every section of the research paper.

### **What is content analysis?**

It is a data collection method that examines recorded human communication.

Content analysis helps answer "Who says what, to whom, why, how, and to what effect?"<sup>1</sup> An early example of content analysis is Ida B. Wells who, in 1891, examined news articles about 728 lynchings in the 1880s. She wanted to see if black men were being lynched because they had raped white women, which was the commonly held assumption/story at the time. In the articles she studied, Wells found that only a third of all men had even been accused of rape (NOT found guilty, just accused). Instead, most were charged with not "staying in their place."<sup>2</sup>

In this example, you can see that Wells's evidence (the articles) showed that while popular mythology claimed black men were lynched for rape, that was not true. Content analysis is a powerful way to compare ideas versus reality. In addition, it means we have data all around us,

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<sup>1</sup> Earl Babbie, *Basics of Social Research*, page 341.

<sup>2</sup> Babbie, page 341-2.

don't need special tools or permission to access and analyze it, and thus can readily use our sociological imaginations to examine the messages we see and receive every day. Also, we don't just analyze words. We can analyze pictures, art, film, etc.

We perform content analysis by choosing information to study, designing a sampling method, organizing a framework for analyzing the data, then coding the data.

**Tentative Schedule of Due Dates (open to change based on changing circumstances/needs)**

September 9 <sup>th</sup> — discussion (talking)	List of three potential topic ideas and methods for
September 23 <sup>rd</sup> —	First 5 articles due (email is fine)
October 7 <sup>th</sup> —	Annotated bibliographies due
October 28 <sup>th</sup> —	Literature reviews due
November 11 <sup>th</sup> —	No class (Veterans' Day)
November 18 <sup>th</sup> —	Methods sections due
December 9 <sup>th</sup> —	Draft presentations due
December 13 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday) —	Final papers due, Blackboard

These are due dates but you will need to be working each week throughout the course. You will need to do library database research, read and synthesize articles, design a methodology, conduct research, write and revise. We meet to answer questions and make sure you are on-track but this is a mostly-independent course. You will have to keep yourself working. This course is a lot of work, but the reward is great.

**Grading**

Class contributions/attendance:	10 points	}	100
Presentation: points	10 points		
Final Paper:	80 points		

A: 94+ points; A-: 90-93 points; B+: 86-89 points; B: 82-85 points; B-: 78-81 points;  
C+: 74-77 points; C: 70-73 points; D: 60-69 points; F: Below 60 points

**Accessibility Statement**

In compliance with Bridgewater State University policy and equal access legislation, I am available to discuss appropriate accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Students will need to register with Student Accessibility Services in the Academic Achievement Center in the Maxwell Library to provide documentation of the disability, to determine reasonable academic accommodations, and obtain a letter of notification to faculty of the accommodations.

## **Academic Integrity**

Any form of dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, cheating and plagiarism. I am including the link to BSU's Policy on Academic integrity: read it carefully and clarify anything you don't understand.

<https://catalog.bridgew.edu/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=1240#definitions>

***I take a tough stand. If I find any plagiarized work or instances of cheating, you will fail the course and I will report you: no questions or excuses. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, ask me before you turn in an assignment, not after you have turned in something questionable.***

## **Online Course Recordings Policy**

This course is scheduled to run synchronously at our scheduled class time via Zoom. These class sessions will NOT be recorded. **Notice to students that they are NOT allowed to record (or photograph or screenshot) any portion of the class** in the absence of instructor permission. Failure to comply will result in reporting you to the Office of Community Standards.

## **Zoom Passwords**

Our Zoom meetings are password protected. Do not share meeting locations or passwords with anyone else. If you do so, I will report it to the Office of Community Standards.

## **Important general administration policies/tips for my classes:**

1. **Read all directions, assignments, quizzes carefully.** If you don't fully understand something, ask. But it is a good life habit to read carefully: as you go through life, failure to read things like contracts can really hurt you. Practice being a thoughtful reader now.
2. **I don't give extra credit** opportunities nor do I run study reviews or provide study guides.
3. All **assignments are due on or before their due dates.** Late assignments will be penalized.
4. **Email Policy**-- I make every effort to respond promptly to your emails. To get a response from me, your emails must adhere the following guidelines:
  1. You must email me through the BSU email system (your bridgew.edu account, NOT your Gmail, Yahoo, etc. account). Every email must include the number of the course and a relevant subject heading (i.e. SOCI 496, literature review help).
  2. I don't accept emailed assignments or exams (unless I tell you otherwise.)
  3. Read the syllabus and/or assignment carefully before messaging. *I will not answer questions that are already clearly answered in these documents.* (Please refer to #1 above.)
  4. Messages should be written professionally. Imagine you are writing to the owner of an organization you really want to work for and write with that in mind.

\*You accept ultimate accountability for any emailed correspondence.\*

5. When you look at Gradebook, in Blackboard, look only at the total of the points you have earned, not any other numbers. Sometimes, Blackboard will list a grade like this: 69/82. This means you have **\*EARNED\*** 69 points out of 82 points you attempted (so, you missed 13 points on assignments and quizzes you did.) Note that there are 100 total points available throughout the entire course. Keep track of your earned points by adding them up.
6. **You earn your grade:** I do not *give* you a grade. If you do all the work, keep up with the reading, and participate in class, you have a good chance of getting a good grade. If you do not do everything, you quickly lose the ability to get a high grade. This is your choice: you are adults who have freely chosen to take the class. You can put in as much or as little effort as you like but your grade is within your hands. If you email me at the end of the term, upset because you are unhappy with your grade, and you did not do all the work, or did not make a thoughtful and diligent effort, there is absolutely nothing I can do for you.
7. **Do not wait until the last minute** to do your work. Remember that technology fails, internet goes down, computers crash, pets have issues, accidents happen. If you start early, none of these will stand in the way of you completing your work on time.
8. Some issues are insurmountable. If you find yourself having a problem that is impacting your ability to achieve your goals in the course, **let me know**. If you are struggling in some way(s), get in touch with me. I can't help you if I don't know there's a problem. So email me and/or set up an appointment so we can figure something out. I want you to succeed in my course and will work with you to try to figure out ways for you do so.

### **SOCI– Critical Issues in Sociology**

**This capstone sample syllabus focuses on policymaking.**

**\*No books are required for this class.**

Students complete the Capstone as a demonstration of their research abilities, critical thinking skills, and the writing process. The capstone builds on the previous years of writing instruction and experience. While the capstone can take a variety of forms, the project will fulfill the expectations of the college requirement in that it will demonstrate student initiative, depend on significant preparatory work, engage the student in active inquiry, integrate acquired knowledge and skills, and be a culmination of previous academic work. The capstone is the opportunity for students to engage in active learning, apply research skills, theoretical perspectives, and demonstrate their mastery of the discipline.

Students are required to research and write a policy analysis paper based on one's interest. Each product will be based on the student's interests, grounded in a research question defined

by the student, and require significant research to produce a written paper and oral presentation. **The final paper should be a minimum of 25 pages with 18-25 academic sources.**

The policy analysis paper gives students the opportunity to use their sociological knowledge and research skills by recommending or revising an existing law or policy that addresses a social problem. This project contains many of the same components as a primary research paper in that students develop a research question, assemble a literature review and apply a theoretical perspective; however instead of collecting and analyzing data, they will research legislative or community-based policies that have been enacted to address a social problem. Using information from the literature review, theory, and existing policies, students will craft a new policy/legislation, reform an existing policy/legislation, or suggest a community-based solution to the social problem. Students will also develop a method to evaluate the effectiveness of their recommendations.

### **Classroom Conduct Policy**

*Because all students and faculty at Bridgewater State University are entitled to a positive and constructive teaching and learning environment, Bridgewater State University students are prohibited from engaging in behavior or activity that causes the disruption of teaching, learning, research or other academic activities necessary for the fulfillment of the university mission.*

*If disruptive behavior occurs, whether in the classroom or another academic environment, a faculty member has the right to remove the student from the classroom setting. Examples of potentially disruptive behavior may include, but are not limited to, using derogatory, vulgar and insulting language directed at an individual or group, unsolicited talking in class, **sleeping in class, using or activating mobile technology**, arriving at or leaving the classroom while class is in session, and/or failing to comply with the legitimate request of a university faculty member. **Cell phones are not permitted in class. Each time I see one, you will lose five points from your final grade. You will need your laptops every week to be used for your research only.***

### **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:**

Bridgewater State University is committed to ensuring equal academic opportunities and inclusion for students. If you have any special circumstances that might impact your participation, success, and/or comfort in class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. These may include (but are not limited to) having a documented disability, involvement in upcoming religious observances, speaking English as a second language, etc.

Any student who due to a documented disability needs special accommodations to participate in class and/or complete assignments should contact the instructor during the add/drop period so that reasonable accommodations can be made. If you have not done so already, please register with the [Disabilities Resources Office in the Academic Achievement Center](#), which is responsible for coordinating accommodations and services for students with disabilities.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND HONESTY:

At BSU “academic honesty is “expected of all students; plagiarism and cheating are not condoned and are subject to academic penalty, which may result in a failure for the course in which the violation took place. A violation may result in a reduced grade, suspension, or dismissal from the college. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, and dishonest practices.” (Bridgewater State University Student Handbook 2011-2012 College Student Handbook 2009-2010: Academic Integrity (Undergraduate) (<http://www.bridgew.edu/Handbook/PoliciesProcedures/academicintegrity.htm>).

In this class, you should complete **all work**, including assignments, on your own, unless I specifically give permission for students to work together. Plagiarism refers to taking the ideas – not just the words – of others for one’s own. Any sources you use, including printed materials and online materials, must be properly cited and acknowledged. If you are not sure what plagiarism is, consult me or see one of the following web sites.

- Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>
- Avoiding Plagiarism [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_plagiar.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html)

## TECHNICAL ISSUES

Back up course work often, for you are responsible for course work lost to technical difficulties. When contributing to online discussion assignments, consider composing your discussion post in Microsoft Word, saving the document, and then copying and pasting the text into the course discussion forum. Do not wait until the last moment to do your work, for if you encounter technical difficulties, you risk turning in your assignment late and losing points or receiving a zero per the **Late Assignments** policy. Work on these files in advance of your due dates and contact your instructor immediately with questions regarding technical issues.

If there are system-wide issues with Blackboard or BSU email, the instructor will contact you via email to provide you with an alternative means of completing course assignments or due date extensions.

If you experience computer difficulties, need help downloading a browser or plug-in, assistance logging into the course, or if you experience any errors or problems while in your online course, contact the BSU Help Desk for assistance. You can call **508-531 2555**. If technical difficulties result in late work, you have to provide an image of the message indicating the technical difficulties.

## CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR:

It is best to contact me via email, [kmacinnis@bridgew.edu](mailto:kmacinnis@bridgew.edu)

**You must use your BSU email account in this class. I will accept email from and send emails to BSU accounts only.** Any email that you send to me in regard to this class is a professional communication so you should strive for proper punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

## **WRITING STUDIO:**

The BSU Writing Studio is a valuable resource and you should take advantage of it.

(<http://www.bridgew.edu/WritingStudio/>)

## **Title IX and Sexual Violence**

The Office of Equal Opportunity and the Title IX Coordinator work to ensure that all members of the campus community flourish in a supportive and fair climate. See

<https://my.bridgew.edu/departments/affirmativeaction/SitePages/Home.aspx> to learn more.

Note the site provides a link to “initiate an investigation of alleged discrimination, harassment, sexual or gender-harassment, domestic or dating violence, stalking or retaliation...” (The associated form indicates that it "is unlawful to retaliate against a student, employee or any other person affiliated with the University for filing a complaint or for cooperating in an investigation of a complaint.”).

## **DISCLAIMER:**

Changes in the syllabus, website, and/or schedule may be made at any time during the term by the instructor. A revised syllabus may be issued at the discretion of the instructor. Deviations will be announced as early as possible.

**(Bring laptop to every class)**

## **Timeline for Policy Project:**

### **Week 1 – January 28<sup>th</sup>**

Review requirements/syllabus

Think about projects

Policy must be legislative or community- based

### **Week 2- February 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Establish Policy Topics**

**Construct Research Question**

**Brief summary of your policy topic- why you chose it and what changes you’re thinking about.**

**Begin researching sources.**

**\*No data is to be collected by students**

### **Week 3 -February 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Bring minimum six literature review sources- begin with historical sources on chosen policy, why policy was established.** This will help further develop your research question. Craft the beginning draft of the literature review section in class.

### **Week 4 – February 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Complete first minimum six literature review sources and bring to class  
Instructor Review**

Begin writing **Introduction** in class- based on your initial literature review work and research question.

**Week 5- February 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Bring minimum six additional sources for literature review- current policy research. For example, its theme and pros and cons of policy.**

Begin writing **historical segment of policy** – in class (**based on initial six literature review**).

**Week 6- March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Complete additional minimum six literature review sources and bring to class.**

Instructor Review

**Complete historical segment** of paper- bring to class.

**Week 7 – March 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Complete current policy material (crux of paper- pros and cons of policy, themes)** and bring to class.

Instructor Review

**Week 8 – March 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Bring a minimum of six additional sources for literature review- theoretical perspectives.**

Create outline for theoretical perspectives in class.

**Week 9- March 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Complete additional literature review sources and bring to class.**

Instructor Review

**Week 10 – April 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Complete main segment of paper and bring to class**

**Instructor Review**

**Choose and outline theoretical perspectives and policy analysis.**

**Week 11- April 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Complete application of theoretical perspectives and policy analysis (summarize theory and apply to policy) and bring to class.**

**Instructor Review**

**Outline policy recommendations for change in class**

**Week 12- April 21<sup>st</sup>**

**Complete recommendations and bring to class.**

**Develop discussion and conclusions in class.**

**Week 13 – April 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Complete discussion and conclusions**

**Instructor Review**

## **Week 14- May 5th**

### **Final Paper Due**

#### **Appendix C- Sample Course Categories**

As part of the major, you have required courses. The eight electives could be categorized in an organized fashion. For example, themes can be used to ensure specialized knowledge in a subject. The following is an example of how race could be taught using three of your courses and students choose one.

##### **Choose one course from the following:**

- Urban Sociology
- Race and Ethnic Relations
- People and Cultures of Africa

##### **Choose one course from the following:**

- Criminology
- Juvenile Delinquency
- Poverty

##### **Choose one course from the following:**

- Gender and Society
- Sociology of Sexualities
- Women in American Society

##### **Choose one course from the following:**

- Sociology of Education
- Sociology of Families
- Sociology of Religion

And then...

Complete four additional sociology courses, at least two must be at the 200-level or above, and one must be at the 300-level or above. Selection may include courses listed above if not already taken to meet elective requirements.

