

**ASSESSMENT PLAN
2017-2018**

Public Affairs: Applied Sociology
(Instructional Degree Program)

M.A.
(Degree Level)

Program Mission:

The Master of Arts in Public Affairs is an interdisciplinary program in the Social Sciences that provides academic training for careers in public and private organizations, both nationally and internationally. The multidisciplinary core curriculum includes courses in political theory, social theory and historical thought, human culture and the political economy. These courses foster a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural environment of public and private organizational policy design, theory and implementation. The program prepares students for professional positions in managerial and leadership roles in government agencies, consulting firms, human services, public-interest organizations, non profits and businesses significantly affected by public policies, as well as train for entry level doctoral studies.

Student Learning Outcome 1:

That students exhibit an understanding and appreciation of a multidisciplinary approach in relation to the work they eventually do and the social environments in which they live.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1:

- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

Assessed through the successful completion of the Interdisciplinary Core requirements earning a B or above:

- Anthropology 651—Seminar: Concepts of Human Culture (3)
- Political Science 563—Political Economy (3) **(this course was cancelled due to family leave on part of the faculty member who teaches the course)**

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
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Total Number of Students Assessed:	0	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	
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Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

Meeting this outcome criterion means that our faculty will determine which methods and activities were most fruitful and how they may be enhanced. The discussion will include a conversation among faculty regarding the factors that contributed to the inability for those students who did not meet the criterion. Approaches to address the issues identified will be developed. No students from the applied sociology concentration were registered in either class for the fall 17 spring 18 semesters as they had all completed this requirement previously.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

That students exhibit reading and writing skills that will benefit them as teachers in secondary schools and community colleges and also benefit them in Ph. D. programs.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2:

- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Effective Communication Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills
- Effective Use of Technology

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

Assessment through the successful presentation of the thesis or professional papers. The data will be qualitative and come from the members of the student’s thesis/professional papers committee. Successful performance will be based on presentation at a national conference where students may demonstrate understanding of sociological theoretical principles and concepts in her/his thesis/papers.

The sociology program has been motivating students to present their research at various conferences. This is not a requirement but one that is highly valued and supported. A club formed out of a graduate course to foster presentation opportunities, The Association for Sociology. All graduate students are highly encouraged to join and present. This criterion also includes successfully defending for the committee and other attendees theses and proposals.

- Soc 699—Thesis (6 credits) or completion of two professional papers and six additional hours of coursework.
 - Conference presentations

Summary of Data :

Number of Students Meeting Criterion for Presentation:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion for presentation: 3	*the soc club which raises funds for conferences and supervises conference submissions was not resurected during this academic year
Number of Students Meeting Criterion for Thesis hours: *Two students successfully defended and completed their theses and thus master’s degrees; one successfully defended their thesis proposal and all are on track to finishing their theses.	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion for Thesis: 0	
Total Number of Students Assessed for Presentations:	4	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	
Total Number of Students Assessed for Thesis:	5		

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

Meeting this outome criterion will mean that our faculty will determine which methods and activities were most fruitul and how they may be enhances. The discussion will include a conversation among faculty regarding the factors that contributed to the inability for those students who did not meet the criterion. Approaches to address the issues identified will be developed. Particularly other faculty members will be identified as potential conference attendance supervisors.

Student Learning Outcome 3:

That students exhibit critical thinking and research skills and demonstrate an understanding of and ability to use qualitative and quantitative sociological research methods of data collection and analysis. They should demonstrate the ability to interpret social scientific research as well as the ability to conduct sociological research through the appropriate application of data collection methods and data analysis techniques.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3:

- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Effective Communication Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills
- Effective Use of Technology

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

Assessment based on the successful completion of course earning a B or above in the on midterm and final exams.

- Soc 630- Research Methods in Sociology
- Soc 530 or Psych 601 - Statistical Analysis

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	4	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion	1
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

All students assessed met this outcome criterion, thus faculty will determine which methods and activities were most fruitful and how they may be enhanced. Approaches to enhance the issues identified will be developed.

Student Learning Outcome 4:

That students demonstrate an understanding of sociology and its contribution to understanding society and human behavior through their familiarity with the theoretical and substantive literature. The students should demonstrate:

- the ability to compare and contrast theoretical perspectives within sociology and understand their application to society
- a theoretical understanding of the impact of race/ethnicity, social class, and gender on the life

experiences, changes, and opportunities of people in society.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 4:

- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 4:

Assessment based on the successful completion of course earning a B or above on midterm and final exams.

- Sociology 639—Classical Sociological Theories (3) (course was cancelled)
- Soc 512—Social Stratification—Assessment based on midterm and final exams. (no graduate students enrolled at the 500 level)
- Soc 593—Race and Ethnic Relations—Assessment based on midterm and final exams. (no graduate students enrolled at the 500 level)
- **Summary of Data:**
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Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	0	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	

*courses already taken in previous year for this cohort; soc 639 was not offered during the 17-18 academic year.

Interpretation of Results for Outcomes 4:

Since no students were assessed we are unable to determine the issues involved. However, our faculty continue to re-evaluate our teaching strategies and develop and test new approaches.

Utilization of Results:

The intent for assessing results are as follows:

Given the small cohort of graduate students in the Public Affairs Program for Sociology faculty will discuss each student individually and their progress. We will identify issues that are

observed as factors for success and those seen as obstacles. Faculty will devise possible strategies to enhance student success given each case.

Faculty will identify early on – through consistent meetings among faculty- those who seem to be struggling and intervene within reason by discussing with students the issue and strategize to improve standing.

For those students who are fulfilling the expectations for success, faculty will reinforce those factors and attempt to enhance those through further interaction and opportunity building.

Faculty will discuss the innovative activities that are being conducted in class and out of class that seem successful and share with faculty those strategies.

ADDITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS:

We recognize that we have a small cohort and need to expand our outreach. This was not a concern in the past since we only had two tenure track faculty in the department for many years. That has since changed with the addition of two tenure track positions within criminology/criminal justice. We ensured that the faculty hired came from both a sociological tradition as well as criminology in order to serve a broader base of students.

We also recognize that although the majority of our students complete their coursework in the first three semesters, however, with only one semester to meet a two year program time-line goal is not enough time for completion of a thesis. Many of our students spend at least a summer and another semester to complete the thesis. This is not an ideal situation because during that time some of our students leave the university as they are often pressed to secure a full time job. This often delays the completion time significantly. (see below for possible strategies to address this)

Changes to Program Based on Results:

We identified that students at the graduate level are in need of more 600 level courses. This is the case because many of our sociology students are recruited from our undergraduate program and therefore have taken several 4/500 level courses and are finding it difficult to locate other graduate level courses. We have discussed this with several members who share the Public Affairs Core and are considering an additional course titled *Intersectionality* that would be suited for political science, history and sociology graduates. The course is proposed to be taught in the spring semester as a pilot in 2019.

Retention Strategies:

We had piloted a course designed to assist graduate students with their writing and writing schedules several years ago, Graduate Writing Seminar. We plan to resurrect this course to help

students stay on track and develop stronger writing skills. This will also help address to some degree the problem identified with students leaving after coursework is finished.

Graduate students are highly encouraged to teach a session as it relates to their graduate assistant assignments. We plan to have this become a more regular part of their responsibilities. Also the sociology club that facilitates conference attendance/presenting is set to resume meeting in the fall 2018 semester. Graduates students are not required but expected to be involved. These two approaches are meant to help students gain confidence in their sociological skills to better assist with completion of their master's thesis.

Faculty have indicated an interest in including more field trips as part of the graduate program experience. In the past students were required and/or encouraged to participate in the Lannan Foundation talks which feature current critical philosophers, journalists, and literary scholars. The fall 2017 semester involved six Lannan talks and in the spring of 2018 there were a total of nine Lannan presentations each of which included attendance of 6-12 (graduate and undergraduate) students during each session. Furthermore, faculty from sociology and anthropology organized and hosted on campus talks by visiting scholars from the Lannan Foundation, the School for Advanced Research and established individual scholars of sociology and related fields as well as members of relevant organizations. These presentations were given during sociology, criminal justice, anthropology, and women's studies courses that included invitations to all campus and community members. Students were also offered extra credit opportunities to attend brown bag sessions sponsored by the Women's Studies program that were scheduled each Friday of both semesters. Most of these brown bag presentations were given by faculty members of the NMHU campus community and involved both undergraduates and graduate students. However, funding for field trip opportunities is no longer available from the institution. The suggestion has been to seek outside funding sources to support such activities.