

ASSESSMENT

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 economic theory. These courses foster a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural environment or public and private organizational policy design and implementation. The program prepares students for professional positions in managerial and leadership roles in government agencies, consulting firms, human services, public-interest organizations 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.

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

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

- Anthropology 6510—Seminar: Concepts of Human Culture (3)
- Political Science 5630—Political Economy (3) *Not assessed here as the course has not been taught during the 2020-21 assessment year

Summary of Data:

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|---|----------|--|------------|
| Number of Students Meeting Criterion 1 (ANTH 6510) | 4 | Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion 1 (ANTH 6510) | 0 |
| Criterion 2 (POLI5/6000) not offered due to retired faculty and no rehire | | Criterion 2 (POLI5/6000) | |
| Total Number of Students Assessed: | 4 | Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: | 100 |

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.

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 local or national conference where students may demonstrated 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.

- Soc 6990—Thesis (6 credits) or completion of two professional papers and six additional hours of coursework.

Summary of Data :

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Number of Students Meeting Criterion Criterion 1 (Presentations): *no students attended conferences due to COVID; one student participated in NMHU FRC Criterion 2 (Thesis hours): 6 in fall 2020 7 spring 2021 | NA(fall 20) 1 (sp 21) 1 (fall 20) 0 (sp 21) | Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion 1 (Presentations): Criterion 2 (Thesis hours): *all currently enrolled students are on track for thesis/publishable paper completion | NA(fall 20) 5 (fall 20) 0 (sp 21) |
| Total Number of Students Assessed: | 6 (fall 20) 7(sp 21) | Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: | 16%(fall 20) 16% (sp 21) |

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.

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 6300- Research Methods in Sociology
- Soc 5300 or Psych 6010 - Statistical Analysis *no graduates students enrolled

Summary of Data

| NUMBER OF STUDENTS MEETING | | NUMBER OF STUDENTS NOT MEETING | |
|---|-----------|---|-------------|
| Criterion 1 (SOCI 6300): | 5 | Criterion 1 (SOCI 6300): | 0 |
| Criterion 2 (SOCI/5300 PSYC 6010) | NA | Criterion 2 (SOCI/5300 PSYC 6010) | NA |
| Total Number of Students Assessed: | | Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: | 100% |

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.

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 5390—Classical Sociological Theories (3)
- Soc 5120—Social Stratification—Assessment based on midterm and final exams.

- Soc 5930—Race and Ethnic Relations—Assessment based on midterm and final exams.

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|---|---|---|-----------|
| NUMBER OF STUDENTS MEETING | 0 | NUMBER OF STUDENTS NOT MEETING | 0 |
| Criterion 1 (SOCL 5390): | | Criterion 1 (SOCL 5390): | |
| Criterion 2 (SOCL 5120) | | Criterion 2 (SOCL 5120) | |
| Criterion 3 (SOCL 5930) | | Criterion 3 (SOCL 5930) | |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS ASSESSED: | 0 | PERCENT OF STUDENTS MEETING CRITERION: | NA |
| *no graduate students enrolled or classes not offered | | | |

- **Utilization of Results:**
- Overall, the program seems to be effective given faculty capacity. An aspect of the program that needs improvement is engendering an understanding of Public Affairs and what options are open to students regarding career paths and further educational degree. We plan to develop a pamphlet and to clearly map these out on our webpage. Moreover, a future exit survey will be constructed to gain insight into student needs and allow longitudinal comparisons. Although the COVID pandemic posed many challenges in the Spring 2021 semester, our faculty were well equipped to transition to online modalities. We also plan to coordinate more intently with History and Political Science to improve upon synchronizing our course offerings and recruitment practices.
- **Changes to Program Based on Results**
Proposed changes include 1.) better information materials to create clear understanding of the program’s expectations and opportunities; 2.) a greater focus on online services/resources; and emphasis on various pedagogical approaches. One faculty member has created a college-wide brown bag series to exchange ideas on various innovative pedagogical strategies. Challenges posed by the pandemic include remaining connected with students. We plan to coordinate a strategy to enhance connections via online methods.
- **Retention Strategies:**
Increase contacts with graduate students especially those who are forced to leave the university before finishing their thesis. We also plan to follow students once they have completed their degrees so to illustrate successful transitions into

the public sphere or further higher educational endeavors. We plan also to use the contact information to invite students back to the campus and share their experiences with current students seeking a master's level degree in Applied Sociology.

- **Additional Comments**

We plan to develop an exit survey to offer comparative data to assess program's effectiveness and needs over a 5-year period.

The Outcomes Assessment process allows faculty to identify issues that emerge in our ever-changing landscape. Our goal is to enhance our program so that students have the tools to succeed after graduation. One issue that we are addressing is the inconsistency with our core course offerings. This was mostly since Political Science had only one full time tenure track faculty for several years. We propose to coordinate with them more intently with semester meetings, sharing course schedules and developing in collaboration retention plans. A future exit survey will provide specific information about our students' plans for their future and their respective academic needs.