

**Sociology**  
**Academic Learning Compact**  
**2008-2010**

**Description of Program**

The discipline of sociology encompasses a broad terrain of sub-fields and specialties exploring various aspects of the social world. At the center is an interest in developing a systematic and theoretically informed understanding of the patterns, tendencies, and possibilities that characterize contemporary social life. Although we are often unaware of its influences on us, the social world structures our opportunities, shapes our aspirations, and provides the stage for our actions. As individuals, we are both sustained and constrained by the web of social relations in which our lives are embedded. Even our perceptions are affected by the way we are situated in the social world, and by our participation in the construction of social reality.

We don't live in "society" in the abstract, of course, but in a particular society with particular characteristics and a specific history. What kind of society do we live in? What are its distinctive characteristics and problems? Where is it headed? Sociological analyses illuminate the effects of social interactions, structures, institutions, and processes on the character and quality of our lives. As part of a liberal arts education, sociology offers theories and research relevant to our ability both to make sense of our circumstances as individuals in contemporary society, and to act efficaciously and constructively in shaping the modern world.

At New College, courses in sociology draw on a range of theoretical perspectives and research traditions. Key themes and topics include: the causes and consequences of particular distributions of power, wealth, and prestige; the significance of class, ethnic, and gender differences in modern societies; social organization at the level of small groups, complex organizations, and whole societies; the sociology of development; the organization of work; cultural production and consumption in both popular and elite arts; the processes of face-to-face social interaction; socialization and social construction; the social production of the urban environment.

**A student majoring in sociology is required to acquire competence in content knowledge, written and oral communication skills and critical thinking skills.** These are gained by mastering the fundamental tools of the discipline: theory, research methods, and statistical analysis. These tools equip students to pursue interests in more specialized topics. Students are also required to take courses in both microsociology (social interaction in small groups, socialization and the family, etc.), and macrosociology (large-scale social change, organizations, etc.). Independent study projects, group research projects, and off-campus contracts provide important opportunities to gain direct experience of social issues explored in courses and tutorials. Students are encouraged to do field research, particularly in the local community.

One might expect to find the following sociology courses on a regular basis: Introductory Sociology, Sociological Research Methods, Social Theory, Race and Ethnicity, Popular Culture and Mass Media, Urban Sociology, Work Organization and Its Alternatives, Social Influence, and Social Psychology. To some extent, courses, tutorials, and independent projects will change in accordance with current student and faculty interests. Recent group projects include the Sarasota Area Project, an on-going research group focusing on the relationship between social life and the built environment locally, and, at the community's invitation, an oral history of a small African American community in the southern part of Sarasota County.

**Representative senior theses in sociology:**

The Deskillings of Labor in the Boat Building Industry  
The Social Organization of a Ballet Company  
Symbolic Interactionism and the Sociology of Knowledge  
The Social Construction of Gender  
The Effect of Playground Design on Children's Play  
The Juvenile Justice System in Gulfville  
Democracy at a Discount: A Case Study of the Public Interest Research Groups and the Fund for Public Interest Research.  
Urban Homesteaders or 'Self-Styled Anarchists'? : Competing Interpretations of Squatting in New York City.

## **TRACKING STUDENT PROGRESS**

A variety of methods are employed to assess the progress of students in Sociology. The most basic methods are class participation and presentations, research papers, examinations, and consultations between faculty and students.

In their fifth contract, students are required to undergo a portfolio review as they request Sociology as an Area of Concentration. All the Sociology faculty discuss each student's portfolio and make a joint assessment of the student's readiness for a sociology degree.

In their sixth contract students must turn in their Thesis Prospectus Form, which also requires faculty sponsors to certify that a student is making adequate progress towards meeting the goals of the program.

Students are encouraged to participate in field work projects which are monitored by faculty. In the case of field work and internships conducted off campus under the sponsorship of other institutions, students must submit a report and or journal to their faculty advisors, who must also receive an evaluation from the person supervising the field work or internship.

Sociology students must research and write a Senior Thesis under the supervision of a faculty member and defend it in a baccalaureate examination before a faculty committee that not only assesses the student's thesis, but also her or his knowledge of the discipline and overall liberal arts education.

Students who do not satisfy all requirements are not allowed to proceed to the baccalaureate examination.

Sociology faculty assess the success of the program by regularly reviewing course enrolments, student readiness in more advanced courses, student performance in courses, tutorials, field work and research, the number of concentrators, the number of students admitted to graduate and professional schools, and those gainfully employed.

OUTCOMES	CONTENT	CRITICAL THINKING	COMMUNICATION
a. Mastery of fundamental theoretical and conceptual tools of the discipline.	x	x	
b. A basic understanding of the foundations of statistical analysis and inference.	x	x	
c. Demonstrated knowledge of foundational work in both micro- and macro- sociology.	x	x	x
d. Experience and demonstrated mastery of sociological research methods	x	x	x
e. An understanding of the place of sociology in the broader context of humanistic and critical discourse.	x	x	
f. Understand, evaluate, and develop sociological arguments, both with regard to their conceptual foundations and on the basis of empirical evidence	x	x	x
g. Integrate a sociological understanding as part of the development of a capacity for critical thinking.	x	x	
h. Engage in critical discussion and oral argument		x	x
i. Develop and support critical arguments in written work.		x	x
j. Conceive, plan, develop, and carry out focused and effective sociological research	x	x	x

COURSE MAPPING			
Introduction to Sociology: Inequality	x	x	
Introduction to Social Psychology	x	x	
Theory	X	X	X
Research Methods	x	x	x
Statistics	x	x	
ISP: Empirical Research	X	X	X
Research Practicum		x	x
Social Psychology Seminar: Social Influence	x	x	x
Sociology of Development	x	x	x
Social Movements	x	x	x
Work Organization and its Alternatives	x	x	x
Sociology of Race and Ethnicity	x	x	x
Senior Seminar	x	x	x
Urban Sociology	X	X	
Thesis Project	x	x	x
Baccalaureate Exam	x	x	x
Space, Place and community	X	X	
Sociology of Sustainable Communities	X	X	X
Sociology of culture	X	X	
Studying Culture on the Micro Level: Employing Qualitative Methods	X	X	X
Sociology of Gender	X	X	
Sociology of Gender and the Body	X	X	
Queer Studies	X	X	X