

Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Sociology
Master's Program in Sociology
PhD Program in Sociology

Assessment Measures

The Department of Sociology uses the following measures to assess departmental learning outcomes:

- Grades, course evaluations, and enrollment totals for Theories of Comparative Societies (SOC 512)
- Comprehensive exams
- Progression through the programs
- Other

Assessment Findings

Theories of Comparative Society Discussion (Appendix A):

The Department of Sociology analyzed course grades, evaluation, and enrollment data in SOC 512 (Theories of Comparative Society) for a five-year period (Fall 2003 through Fall 2007). This is the required course for all Sociology graduate students at the M.A. level and is required of all Ph.D. students who have not completed a similar course during their M.A. work.

During this period, enrollment remained between 11 and 14 students. The majority of students had good to exceptional performance (B to A+), with average grades ranging from 3.65 to 4.00 and a trend toward increasingly higher grades over the years. Over the period analyzed 12 students received grade of A and 3 students received the grade of B.

The course and instructor mean ratings fluctuated about one percent over the years (ranging from 6.85 to 9.65 out of ten for course rating, and 7.75 to 10.00 out of ten for instructor rating). This relatively high rating of the courses reflects the amount of effort that our faculty and students are putting into their work. The department believes that the courses serves its function and prepares students for the remainder of their program. It is intimately connected to the successful completion of the M.A. degree.

In a supplementary analysis, we considered whether students' grades in Sociology 512 were related to their persistence in the program. (The data are not displayed to preserve confidentiality.) In the cohorts we examined, if a student withdrew from Sociology 512 (skill course), he/she dropped out of the program. Conversely, most students who received an A or B continued through the program, but there were anomalies and getting a good grade in Sociology 512 did not guarantee that the student persisted. Two students who earned an A- in Sociology 512 subsequently dropped out. One student who received an F when he first took the course repeated it

and earned a B. This student eventually progressed through the program and was awarded a Master's degree.

Master's Comprehensive Exams and Progression (Appendices B, C):

Twenty-five out of 36 new students in master's program cohorts starting in Fall 2000 through 2006 completed their degrees and seven withdrew before the end of their studies. The department believes that a full time student should complete the master's degree within two years of enrollment but in analyzing the student performance, it is clear that a number had turned from initial full time status to part time status for financial reasons. Only 14 out of the 25 students who graduated passed their comprehensives as expected by the end of the second year of registration (usually in the Spring) and another six completed the requirement in their third year (usually during the Summer or Fall term). Four satisfied all requirements in their fourth year of enrollment and one delayed until the fifth year. Only four students among the twenty-five who completed the M.A. proceeded on to the Ph.D. program at CUA while, to the department's knowledge, two individuals who left with an M.A. are pursuing the Ph.D. at other institutions. Only one student attempted the master's comp but failed. However, the student passed in the next semester. Of the four students who proceeded on to the Ph.D. from the M.A., three completed their Ph.D. comps in their second year of registration at that level. The fourth student completed the Ph.D. examinations in the third year of registration. Three of the four students remain in the program and are completing their dissertations. The fourth student dropped out for financial reasons.

PhD Comprehensive Exams and Progression (Appendices B, C):

Six out of the 11 new PhD students in the cohorts starting between Fall 2000 through 2006 passed their PhD major comps within five years. Three students dropped out of the program before completion of their courses. This attrition is regular as it reflects the fact that some students who have been admitted during 1995-2003 period of time did not necessarily fit well with the program. The Department has strengthened its advising and quality control procedures. Of the 9 students who have passed the comprehensive examination, six have approved dissertation proposals and have completed the dissertation phase of the degree to date. Three individuals have dropped out for financial reasons. Two remaining students are laboring on their projects and are expected to graduate within six months.

Curricular Improvements for Master's Program and Ph.D. Program

The key course is Sociology 512 which functions as the gateway course in the department. Both student and faculty performance are continuously reviewed and no changes have been made to it in the recent past because of our belief that it is functioning properly to prepare students for the remainder of their work.

We also look at the number of students who move on from the M.A. to the Ph.D. level and the number of students who complete the Ph.D. degree. The latter element has been subject to review. The temporary suspension of admission into the PhD program has caused concern for the department. Students who are interested in becoming part of our MA program always ask about the PhD program. One of the most often asked questions is if I get my MA degree here is there some place locally where I can get my PhD degree? We have granted 6 Ph.D.s over the past four

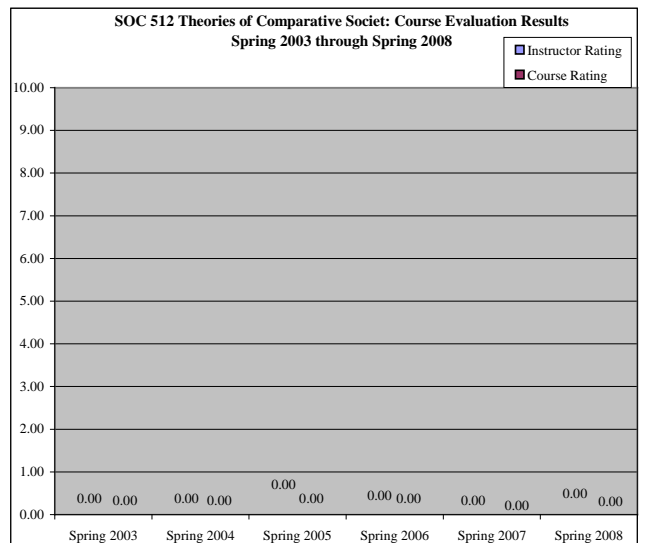
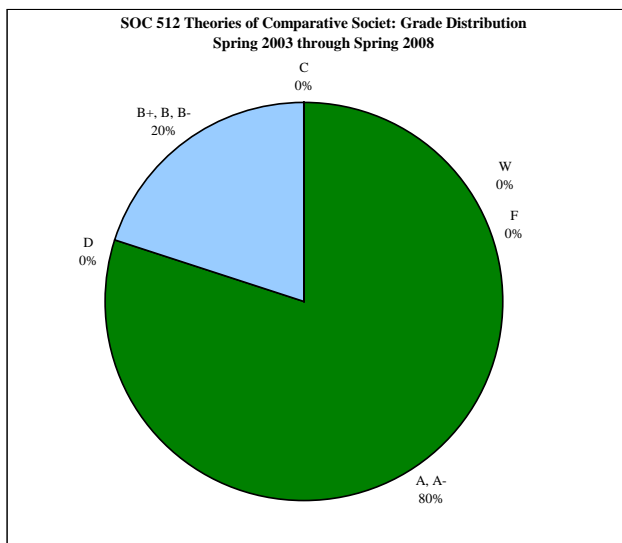
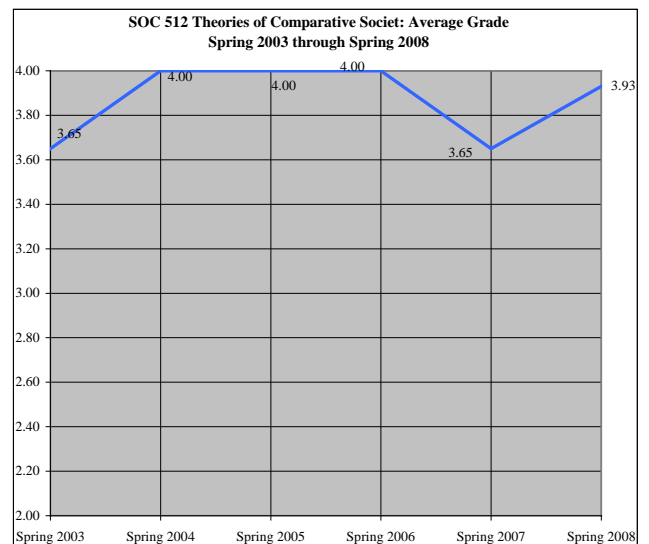
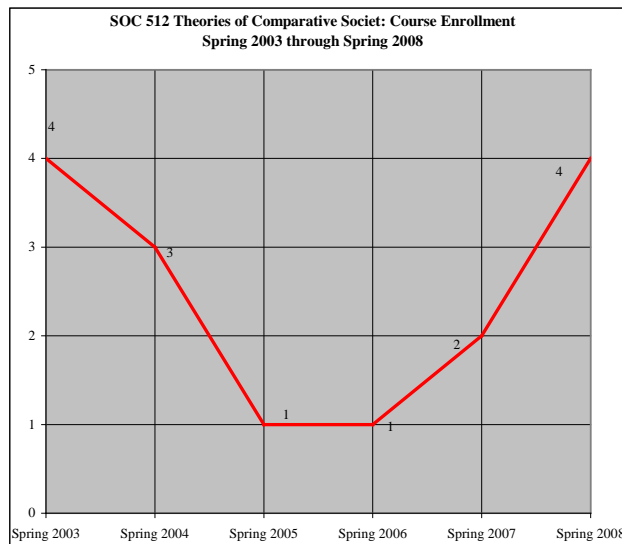
years, department members are heavily engaged into improving the rate of completion of the degree. In assessing the issues involved, however, we have concluded that it is not the academic component of the program which is at fault – the vast majority of our graduates are employed in government service, academia or as independent scholars -- but rather the inability of the department to offer adequate funding in the form of tuition waivers beyond the years of taking courses, and dissertation stipends which are routinely available at larger universities for students doing their dissertation research. In an effort to seek increased support, we have decided to create the position of Director of Graduate Studies to closely monitor both the financial and the professional needs of all of our graduate students.

Appendix A

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Institutional Research and Assessment

COURSE SUMMARY DATA: DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY SOC 512 Theories of Comparative Societ

Term	Course Enrollment	Course Grade		Course Grades						Course Evaluation Results						
		Avg.	StDev.	A, A-	B+, B, B-	C	D	F	W	Course Eval. #	%	Instructor Rating Avg.	StDev.	Course Rating Avg.	StDev.	
Spring 2003	4	3.65	0.40	2	2											
Spring 2004	3	4.00	0.00	3												
Spring 2005	1	4.00		1												
Spring 2006	1	4.00		1												
Spring 2007	2	3.65	0.49	1	1											
Spring 2008	4	3.93	0.15	4												



Appendix B

PhD Info

Defended	Graduated
	May 06
9/4/07	May 08
11/14/07	May 08
10/24/08	May 09
10/15/08	May 09
11/19/08	May 09

The department currently has 11 students in the graduate program (including the three who defended this year).

Two still have to defend their dissertations. One is scheduled to defend in the spring semester. When these two students have defended we will have no PhD students.

The department currently has six students in the M.A. program. Three of these students are part-time. We need a good recruitment program.

Two of our students who received their MA degree are now in Ph.D. Sociology programs at other institutions.

One received her MA degree May 05 and is attending Georgia Tech..

One received her MA degree May 08 and is attending Virginia Tech.

Three students dropped out of the Ph.D. program for financial reasons.

Two students received their MA degree but did not continue in the PhD program.

One student– married and dropped out of the MA program

One student– changed the area she wanted to go in her life; dropped out of the MA program

One student– dropped out of the MA program due to family medical problems

Appendix C

Department of Sociology

MA Degrees Awarded

2002	1
2003	1
2004	1
2005	3
2006	1
2007	1
2008	1

PhD Degrees Awarded

2006	1
2008	2
2009	3