# Department Assessment Grant Report
### Facilitator: Susan Alexander, Department of Sociology

### September 8, 2009

**RETREAT 1: May 13, 2009**

The Sociology Department held the first day-long assessment retreat on May 13, 2009.  In attendance were: Susan Alexander, Mary Ann Kanieski, Leslie Wang, Carrie Erlin, and Nori Drach (student representative)

In the morning, the faculty shared their experiences in developing and using assessment tools for a course or assignments within a course taught during the spring 2009 semester. Each faculty member brought one or more assessment rubrics they had used and we discussed the effectiveness of the tool and additional ideas for other types of assessment rubrics.

In the afternoon, we had a discussion about how to create assessment tools for various kinds of assignments or other classroom exercises, group discussion, or all other types of pedagogical work. We concentrated on the types of course work that might not appear be easy to assess (e.g. group discussion or service learning assignments), and we discussed the potential of developing some standardized rubrics or elements of rubrics (e.g. grading the mechanics of a sociology paper).


**RETREAT 2: August 25, 2009**

The Sociology Department held the second, evening assessment retreat on May 13, 2009.  In attendance were: Susan Alexander, Mary Ann Kanieski, Leslie Wang, Carrie Erlin, Hank Borne, and Nori Drach (student representative)

During the summer faculty focused on two main points: 1. identifying the primary goals and student learning outcomes for each course they would teach in the fall, and 2. developing new assessment rubrics for course assignments, presentations, and other pedagogical strategies.

During the first half of this meeting, faculty shared their fall 2009 course syllabi identifying goals and student learning outcomes. One issue was the variety of formats used, so everyone is revising to a more standardized department format. There was also some confusion over how one identifies which goals and learning outcomes should be highlightened in a course taught by more than one faculty member (e.g. SOC 153 Introduction to Sociology is taught by more than one faculty member in a given semester).

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## Assessment Grant Questions

1.  What learning outcomes (if any) did you/your departments have for the course/department before your grant?

The Sociology Department had meet in a mini-retreat on January 19, 2009 to review a first draft of the newly developed Sociology Department goals and student learning outcomes. All sociology faculty, including our adjunct Hank Borne, and Jessica Ickes were in attendance. The conversation included reviewing the assessment documents and suggestions for revisions and additions to the draft. A copy of the revised Sociology Department goals and student learning outcomes is attached. We decided to implement this new plan in the fall 2009 semester, and will revisit the plan again in the spring to determine if additional revisions are needed.

2. What techniques for assessment (if any) were you/your department using before your grant?

We have a variety of mechanisms for assessing individual student work (e.g. tests, papers presentations, etc.). However, we did not have any systematic assessment tools to assess such assignments during a semester or from semester to semester (e.g. assessing if students' knowledge increased over the semester or if the assignment was effective from one semester to the next).

3. What learning outcomes did you/your department define for this course/your department as a result of your grant?

The Tables following identify the four Sociology Departments goals (G1, G2, G3, G4) and each accompanying students learning outcomes (O1, O2, O3...).

### Learning Outcomes for SOC G1

The link, in C. Wright Mills' terms, between private troubles and public issues, or the individual's experience and larger social processes.

**Action**: Students are able to articulate the connection between individuals' lives and larger social forces (e.g. individual's poverty is related to a social force such as racism) and/or social structural conditions (e.g. individual's poverty is related to underfunded educational institution)

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| SOC G1O1 | For students to evaluate current social conditions whether at the local, national, or global level including social inequalities such as poverty, racism, sexism, and/or homophobia. |
| SOC G1O2 | For students to discern the current level of human needs that is typically provided by social institutions such as education, employment, healthcare, legal representation, political access, and/or technology access. |
| SOC G1O3 | For students to develop the knowledge to respond as an informed agent of change by acquiring research skills necessary for change including the ability to locate and access pertinent social science data. |

### Learning Outcomes for SOC G2

The impact of social structures on individuals and/or groups that includes both micro and macro-level social processes.

**Action**: Students are able to articulate how social structures (e.g. families, education, mass media, justice system, economy, politics) impact individuals or groups (class, race, ethnicity,

| | gender, sexual identity) using various theoretical frameworks (e.g. Marxism, Functionalism) |
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| SOC G2O1 | For student to exhibits sound knowledge of the formation of human identities such as gender identify racial identity, ethnic identity, social class identity, sexual identity, or family identity. |
| SOC G2O2 | For students to understand the development and functioning of diverse cultures (e.g. ethnic groups or nationality groups) and social groupings (e.g. social classes or family units). |
| SOC G2O3 | For students to recognizing the effect that social group differences such as gender, religion, values, culture and privilege can have on the ways that people interpret and act in the world |
| SOC G2O4 | For students to demonstrates the ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives, including various sociological theoretical perspectives including Conflict Theory, Structural-Functionalism, Symbolic Interaction, and Postmodern/Multicultural Theories. |

## Learning Outcomes for SOC G3
The value of empirical evidence for understanding social phenomenon.

**Action**: Students are able to demonstrate how to locate, interpret, and/or produce empirical data about social phenomenon (e.g. poverty, inequality based on race, ethnicity, and gender)

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| SOC G3O1 | For students to develop critical thinking skills based upon the scientific logic of objectivity including the ability to acquire and evaluate pertinent empirical information in order to develop an informed hypothesis or theory. |
| SOC G3O2 | For students to engage in the qualitative interpretation of texts and artifacts (e.g. advertisements, films, or music lyrics) through content analysis methodology in order to discern implicit themes. |
| SOC G3O3 | For students to evaluation empirical data, both quantitative and qualitative, including sampling technique, sample size, variables selected, and interpretation of data. |
| SOC G3O4 | For students to develop the skills for investigative problem solving including the ability to design and conduct an empirically based research project using social scientific methodology (e.g. survey, interview, content analysis, observation, etc...) |
| SOC G3O5 | For students to acquire quantitative reasoning including social statistics in order to measurement and/or describe social variables and to use computerized statistical packages such as SPSS. |
| SOC G3O6 | For students to demonstrate information literacy, more specifically media literacy, in order to access, analyze, evaluate and create media (e.g. texts, films, lyrics, websites, etc.) in a variety of forms. |

## Learning Outcomes for SOC G4
Students demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate the sociological perspectives.

**Action**: Students are able to professionally present sociology research to a general audience.

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| SOC G4O1 | For students to present written sociological research findings in a clear manner including appropriate citations, sociological language, and professional tone. |
| SOC G4O2 | For students to orally present their ideas or research findings to an audience including the use of appropriate handouts, Power Points, or other visual displays. |

4. What techniques will you/your department use to assess each learning outcome?

This is currently the area we are focusing upon in the assessment process. During the summer, each faculty members developed assessment tool/techniques/rubrics for individual course assignments and other pedagogical strategies (e.g. group discussion, internships, etc.) The conversation about development, implementation, and assessment of the rubrics will continue this academic year.

5. How will tell you whether the students achieved each learning outcome?

We will use the various assessment rubrics we have developed or are in the process of developing this semester to begin to identify areas in which student performance is stronger or weaker. For example, in the spring 2009 semester in SOC 319 Social Theories, Susan developed a grading rubric that is used for the four papers required in the course (see attached example). Over time, she was able to measure the students' ability to complete each of the specific elements of the paper. Thus an individual student's progress could be assessed over time, and cumulative data could demonstrate the total class's progress over the semester.

6. Which resources did you consulted in your work on assessment? Which would you recommend to others? (This will help us develop a resource list to share with others interested in assessment)

We used information specific to sociology developed by the American Sociological Society including:

Charles S. Hohm and William S. Johnson (eds.) 2001. *Assessing Student Learning in Sociology.* Washington, DC: American Sociological Association

ASA Task Force on Assessing the Undergraduate Sociology Major*. 2005. Creating an Effective Assessment Plan for the Sociology Major.* New York: American Sociological Association