

ASSESSMENT WEBSITE INFORMATION

College: Humanities

Degree Program: Sociology BA

Chair/Director: Larry Salinger

2012 Report

DATA SAY:

In the Spring of 2011, faculty assessed our graduating students on five dimensions: theory, research skills, communication abilities, sub-discipline knowledge, and knowledge of race, class, and gender. The lowest score was on communication, where graduating seniors received a score of 2.87/5. In a meeting on this topic, we realized that the largest concern is about writing ability.

SO WHAT:

Students need to have the ability to write clearly. We considered several possible avenues to improve writing ability, including adding an additional course in writing, emphasizing essay tests over multiple choice tests, and requiring completion of the writing requirement before beginning sociology classes.

HOW WE CHANGED:

We decided to emphasize writing throughout the curriculum by adding additional writing requirements to current classes.

WHAT WE GOT:

It will take at least a year before graduating seniors have experienced the additional writing emphasis. However, we did ask students in Sociology of Sexuality, a writing intensive course, to assess how the course impacted their own writing ability. We asked students whether they agreed with the statement that the course improved their writing. The average score was 3.97/5, indicating that most students felt that the course improved their writing ability.

2013 – The faculty-assessed writing scores for graduating seniors dropped slightly from 3.1 to 3.07 from 2012-2013. We need to do additional work in the future to help students improve their writing. We have instituted a Junior Seminar to emphasize writing, which will begin in Fall, 2014.



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2013 Report

DATA SAY:

Unfortunately, there are high rates of plagiarism in many of our courses. We took a sample of four upper-division courses this semester and assessed the degree of plagiarism on final papers. Our results showed that 0% of students plagiarized in Sociology of Aging; 6% of students plagiarized in Social Organizations; 9% of students plagiarized in Sociology of Families; and 11% of students plagiarized in Intimate Relationships. This is an average plagiarism rate of about 6.5% on final papers in upper-division courses.

SO WHAT:

We are concerned that plagiarism is reflective of general poor quality writing. Students who are uninformed about the norms of writing and citation may be poorly prepared for writing requirements after graduation. In addition, students may resort to plagiarism because they feel ill-prepared to write their own original ideas.

HOW WE CHANGED:

In 2013-2014, we are planning to institute a universal, program-wide plagiarism policy. This policy will be provided in all classes and will give students more clear guidelines. This will be a temporary measure until more comprehensive writing education takes place in the Junior Seminar, which will begin in Fall 2014.

WHAT WE GOT:

We are waiting to follow up. We will assess four upper-division courses in Spring 2014. We are hoping the number is lower than 6.5%.

