SPECIAL REPORT

of the

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

concerning a

REVISION OF THE SOCIOLOGY B.A. DEGREE PROGRAM

Presented at the
743rd Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
December 11, 2014

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Background and Recommendation

This proposal revises the requirements of the Sociology major by replacing minimum course requirements with minimum credit requirements. To this end, the department has proposed replacing the requirement to take at least 11 courses in Sociology with a requirement to complete at least 40 credits in Sociology; and replacing the requirement to take five courses within the UMass Amherst Sociology Department with a requirement to take 20 credits within the UMass Amherst Sociology Department.

The Department is in the process of converting a number of its courses from three-credit hours to four-credit hours. However, this legislation does not increase the credit load of any course. Credit increases in specific courses are subject to review as per Faculty Senate Document 15-001.

The revision was submitted as proposal #1265 on the UMass Course and Curriculum Management System.

The Program Subcommittee recommended the approval of this proposal and the Academic Matters Council unanimously voted in favor of it on September 17, 2014.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the Revision of the Sociology B.A. Degree Program, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 15-018.
During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Sociology Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) undertook a comprehensive review of our undergraduate curriculum, including evaluating current course offerings in regard to content, workload, and learning goals of a tiered curriculum. In January 2013, the UPC held a day-long all-faculty retreat to review the goals of the 100-, 200-, 300- and 400-level structure of courses, the workload of 3- and 4-credit courses, the placement of required courses in the curriculum, and the development of capstone courses at the 400 level. We also reviewed data from the senior satisfaction survey, data on changes in course enrollments, completion rates, and numbers of Sociology majors, and data collected internally on workload requirements in a range of classes across all levels and offered at 3 and 4 credits. As a follow-up to this retreat, the UPC made multiple recommendations to the faculty for programmatic changes, subject to faculty vote. This memorandum requests action on two significant and one minor program changes: 1) the rationalization of student and faculty workload across classes by a movement of all undergraduate courses in Sociology to 4-credit courses; 2) a shift from course to credit load requirements for the Sociology major that maintains expectations for student total workload for the major. Rather than requiring 11 courses in Sociology, we propose to move to requiring a total of 40 credits in Sociology; and 3) the renumbering of our required theory course from SOCIOL 401 to SOCIOL 304.

Currently all of the 100-level, most of the 200-level and several of the 300 and 400 level courses in Sociology are being taught as 4-credit courses. The fact that lower division courses consistently carry more credits than upper division courses leads to confusion, perverse incentives to take additional lower division courses, and resentment among students. To allow students to focus and work more intensely in upper-division substantive courses, to bring harmony to the curriculum, and to reduce the number of courses required for a major in Sociology (while maintaining credit requirements), the department of Sociology has decided to move its undergraduate curriculum to 4-credit courses. This change will also promote equity across 5-college Sociology departments, since 5-college students currently receive 4 credits at their home institution for taking a 3-credit UMass Sociology course.

Led by the undergraduate program committee, the department has approached this change in a deliberate and thoughtful manner, including holding an all-department faculty retreat in spring of 2013 to debate issues regarding a move to a 4-credit undergraduate curriculum, to create best practices for teaching 4-credit courses, and to advise faculty in regularizing course workloads across classes rising to a 4-credit standard.

Existing Requirements:

* Students must take at least 11 courses in Sociology.
* Students must take at least 5 courses within the UMASS Amherst Sociology Department.
* Students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of C (2.0) in their Sociology classes.
* To count for the major, all courses in Sociology must be graded (not Pass/Fail).
* Only one 100 level course may count toward the major.

Course Requirements:

Course 1: One 100-level

Course 2: SOC 212 — Statistics
(or PSYCH 240, RES-ECON 211 or 212, STATISTC 111 or 240)

Course 3: SOCIOL 213 — Data Collection and Analysis

Course 4: SOCIOL 401 — Sociological Theories and Perspectives

Course 5: One Junior Year Writing Course (may also count toward distribution area below)

Courses 5, 6, and 7: One Course from each of the following distribution areas:
Area 1: Crime, Law, and Deviance
241 Criminology
242 Drugs & Society
293M Intro to Human Rights
323 Sociology of Law
342 Deviance & Social Order
343 Hate Crime in America
344 Gender & Crime
346 Communities & Crime
347 Corporate Crime
391D Conformity and Deviance
391M Serial & Mass Murder (only offered online)
394F Crime & Forensics (only offered online)
392J Race & Policing (only offered online)
394S White Collar Crime (only offered online)
397D Delinquency & Juvenile Justice (only offered online)
395K Domestic Violence (only offered online)
481 Sociology of Mental Health

Area 2: Culture, Organizations, and Institutions
220 Sociology of American Culture
222 The Family
240 Sociology of Asian American Experience
320 Work and Society
321 Sociology of Religion
322 Sociology of Education
325 Political Sociology
352 Media, Technology, and Sociology
384 Sociology of Love
382 Sociology of Childhood
386 Complex Organizations
387 Sexuality and Society
442 Sociology of Medicine

Area 3: Social Inequality and Diversity
224 Social Class and Inequality
240 Sociology of Asian American Experience
244 Sociology of Immigration
291L Introduction of Latin American Culture
328 Introduction to Social Work
329 Social Movements
335 Radical Movements
340 Race Relations
360 Urban Sociology
361 Demography of Minority Groups
383 Gender and Society
385 Gender and Family
388 Gender and Globalization

Courses 8, 9, 10 & 11: four additional 200-level or above Sociology electives
Proposed Requirements:

* Students must take at least 40 credits in Sociology.
* Students must take at least 20 credits within the UMASS Amherst Sociology Department.
* Students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of C (2.0) in their Sociology classes.
* To count for the major, all courses in Sociology must be graded (not Pass/Fail).
* Only one 100 level course may count toward the major.

Major Requirements:

1. One 100-level course
2. SOCIOL 212 — Statistics (or PSYCH 240, RES-ECON 211 or 212, STATISTIC 111 or 240)
3. SOCIOL 213 — Data Collection and Analysis
4. SOCIOL 401 301 — Sociological Theories and Perspectives
5. One Course from each of the following distribution areas:

Area 1: Crime, Law, and Deviance
241 Criminology
242 Drugs & Society
293M Intro to Human Rights
323 Sociology of Law
342 Deviance & Social Order
343 Hate Crime in America
344 Gender & Crime
346 Communities & Crime
347 Corporate Crime
391D Conformity and Deviance
391M Serial & Mass Murder (only offered online)
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394S White Collar Crime (only offered online)
397D Delinquency & Juvenile Justice (only offered online)
395K Domestic Violence (only offered online)
424 Sex Work in Global Perspective
481 Sociology of Mental Health

Area 2: Culture, Organizations, and Institutions
220 Sociology of American Culture
222 The Family
240 Sociology of Asian American Experience
320 Work and Society
321 Sociology of Religion
322 Sociology of Education
325 Political Sociology
352 Media, Technology, and Sociology
384 Sociology of Love
382 Sociology of Childhood
386 Complex Organizations
387 Sexuality and Society
442 Sociology of Medicine

Area 3: Social Inequality and Diversity
224 Social Class and Inequality
240 Sociology of Asian American Experience
244 Sociology of Immigration
291L Introduction of Latin American Culture
6. A Junior Year Writing Course (may also count toward distribution area above or general electives below)
7. An additional 12 credits of electives in Sociology

3- to 4-Credit Load Proposal Rationale:

Because of the high number of 4-credit general education courses taught in Sociology and the increase of 4-credit non-general education courses (including the junior year writing course and the required theory course), currently more than half of instructors and students are participating in 4-credit courses in any given semester. For example, in fall 2013, only 37% of our seats were offered in 3-credit classes, in contrast, 63% of our students were taught in 4-credit classes. Including all instructional faculty, 47% of faculty taught 4-credit classes, while 53% taught 3-credit classes. Below is a quick summary of courses on offer at the 100/200/300/400 levels, the percentage that currently carry 4-credits (versus 3 credits), the average number of students taught and credit hours taught (taken from 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level # of Courses</th>
<th>% that are 4-credits</th>
<th>Average # seats</th>
<th>Ave. # Credit Hrs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1328</td>
<td>5321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 12</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>2840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 39</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 5</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This high level of heterogeneity in credit loads per course leads to a number of challenges for students and faculty. First, some sections of the same course are offered at 3 or 4 credits, depending on whether the course meets the junior year writing requirement. This combined with the fact that students can put different combinations of 3 and 4 credit courses to meet the 11 course requirement for the major means students are often jockeying to get into specific courses and sections of courses due to their credit load rather than their substantive focus. This creates undue burden on students in completing the major. It also creates a sense of unfairness among the students and enormous headaches during course enrollment periods for staff. Making this sense of unfairness worse is that non-UMass 5-college students receive 4 credits for UMass courses, even when these courses are taught as 3-credit courses to UMass students (and despite similar credit requirements for graduation across the 5 colleges). Second, some faculty heavily teach more intensive 4-credit courses while other faculty do not. This creates both a sense of unfairness among the faculty, as well as confusion over workloads in courses. With many students still juggling 5 courses a semester, faculty in 4-credit courses often encounter student work overload when these classes are disproportionately 4-credits in a particular semester.

Moving our entire undergraduate program to 4-credit courses and adjusting the total credit load for major completion would have numerous benefits. First, students would benefit by needing to take a lower number of courses and being able to focus more intensely in the courses they take. While this might slightly lower the diversity of classes students enroll in, we believe the greater capacity it allows for in-depth learning counterbalances this. Second, having all 4-credit courses would bring equity across the program for both students and instructors. In our review of course syllabi, we have begun the process of creating more consistent expectations for workload in courses, by bringing up low-expectation courses and tampering down excessive expectation courses. This creates more consistency in teaching and learning expectations across courses, and should minimize student jockeying to enroll in higher or lower credit load sections of the same course.
General Background of Sociology’s Undergraduate Curriculum Review

This intensive review resulted in a number of recommended changes:

1. By faculty vote, we decided to renumber the required theory course from SOCIOL 401 to 304, maintaining its status as an Integrative Experience course. SOCIOL 301 must be taken prior to or concurrently with enrollment in a 400 level course.

2. Encouragement of “soft” sequences in linking upper division to lower division courses, by requiring substantive introductory courses at the 200 level for specialized upper division courses (e.g., SOCIOL 385 “Gender & the Family” can require SOCIOL 222 “The Family” as a pre-requisite). Encouragement of faculty working in heavily taught areas (political soc, gender, race and ethnicity, etc.) to develop area sequences with other instructors by creating an introductory course at the 200 level and using it as a pre-requisite for advanced courses at the 300 and 400 levels.

3. Recommendation that faculty wanting to teach courses reaching a broader audience without pre-requisites renumber their courses from the 300 and 400 levels to the 200 level.

4. By a faculty vote, we decided to begin development of courses at the 400 level aimed at seniors who have completed SOCIOL 212, 213 and 304. These advanced courses can take the form of area capstones, matching our distribution areas, or extending a core area (theory or methods). Substantive focus depends on instructors’ expertise, but the aim would be to involve students in a collective, small group, or individual research projects, or to participate in an intensive reading/writing seminar. These capstones would have an enrollment cap of 25 (or higher at instructor’s request):
   a. Capstone in Social Inequality and Diversity
   b. Capstone in Culture, Organizations, and Institutions
   c. Capstone in Crime, Law, and Deviance
   d. Capstone in Social Theory
   e. Capstone in Research Methods (Qualitative and/or Quantitative)

No new resources are needed as this proposal is a revision of existing undergraduate requirements. It calls for no new courses or programs. Faculty teaching load will remain unchanged.