

THE FIELD

Sociology illuminates all aspects of human life: family, gender, race, and ethnic relations; aging; education; immigration; religion; work; and health, just to name a few. Sociologists study and explain social behaviors, interactions, and institutions. To do so, they use a diverse set of social theories and a battery of methods, from intimate qualitative interviews and participant observation to demography and large-scale network analysis. Although sociologists focus upon what are commonly regarded as social problems—discrimination, crime, drug addiction, and poverty, for example—they also examine fundamental social processes present in any society: social change, conflict, and inequality. Students are trained to learn how society works and how it can be changed for the better. In sum, sociology is concerned with achieving a fundamental understanding of the social world, connecting individual meanings and actions with broad social forces, and finding solutions to social problems.

A minor in sociology is available.

THE MAJOR

The sociology major requires a minimum of 12 courses, 20 credits of which must be taken within the UMass Amherst sociology department. The required classes include one introductory sociology course, Statistics (SOCIOL 212), Data Collection and Analysis (SOCIOL 213), Writing in Sociology (SOCIOL 301), and Foundations of Sociological Theory (SOCIOL 302). Students also complete one sociology course at the 200 level or above in each of our three distribution areas: crime, law, and deviance; culture, organizations, and institutions; and social inequality and diversity; as well as at least 12 additional credits of upper-level sociology courses, eight credits of which must be taken at the 300 level or above. The remaining four credits can be taken at the 200 level or above, or can be fulfilled through four credits of a sociology-related internship with departmental approval. Students also must take one international/intercultural course within the sociology department and maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 in their sociology classes.

The department offers four certificates: criminology and the criminal justice system, social work and social welfare, social research analysis, and population studies. Certificates are open to majors and nonmajors.

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

The department encourages students to do internships and engage in community service learning. These opportunities help students ground their understandings of sociology and prepare them for employment or graduate study.

HONORS

The sociology department encourages students to explore honors research opportunities, culminating in an honors thesis. Refer to the department website and contact the departmental honors coordinator for information on how to pursue honors opportunities within the major.

STUDY ABROAD AND DOMESTIC EXCHANGE

Majors are encouraged to study abroad or participate in a domestic exchange program if it supports their academic and career goals. Students should contact the International Programs Office (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo) and work closely with their academic advisor to choose the appropriate courses in preparation.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Sociology offers a well-rounded liberal arts education as well as preparation for entry-level professional jobs or graduate study. Our certificates, in particular, are designed to help students forge a path toward a meaningful career. Students interested in social work at the individual or community level, or social policy, could successfully pursue the social work and social welfare certificate. The criminology and the criminal justice system certificate provides a background for careers in various aspects of law enforcement. The population studies certificate prepares students for jobs requiring demographic skills and graduate study in the field of demography. Finally, the social research analysis certificate offers students a solid grounding in research methods, positioning them for employment in research institutes, as well as graduate study in survey research, public health, program evaluation, market research, public policy, and policy administration.

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

The social and behavioral sciences focus on behavior and organization from cultural, social, and biological perspectives, examining people as both social and individual beings. Undergraduates in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences study culture, society, and individual and social interaction processes and learn methods by which knowledge in the social and behavioral sciences is created. Students are guided by the SBS Pathways approach, integrating their academic, experiential, and professional pathways. They anchor their knowledge in at least one discipline, but are encouraged to expand this knowledge through various broadening experiences inside and outside the classroom.

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