

# **SOCIOLOGY MAJOR HANDBOOK**

**2014-2015**

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## **WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

The Department of Sociology at the University of South Carolina Aiken offers the Bachelor of Arts Degree, Major in Sociology, with concentrations in criminology/criminal justice, human services, and general sociology. While there is a common core of courses which sociology majors must complete, other courses may be selected to reflect individual student interests and career goals.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide sociology majors with a reference to departmental opportunities and requirements. **Majors are expected to read this handbook in order to familiarize themselves with degree requirements and other responsibilities (e.g., meeting with academic advisors, applying for graduation) and to continue to refer to it as they continue to progress toward completion of the degree program.**

Efforts have been made to verify that all information in this handbook is accurate and current. In case there is a discrepancy between requirements or procedures presented here and those printed in the *USCA Bulletin* (the academic year on the cover of this handbook), the *USCA Bulletin* is the deciding document.

## **THE MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

The mission of the Department of Sociology is to provide students with an understanding of social science theories, concepts, and methods leading to an ability to collect social science data, integrate material from diverse sources, draw conclusions from data, appreciate other cultures, and to be aware of issues surrounding social change.

Students have the opportunity to earn the Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology in one of three concentrations: general, human services, or criminology/criminal justice. In addition, the Department provides general education courses in geography and anthropology. Departmental mission includes contributing to the overall enhancement of the academic and scholarly community. The Department also provides expertise to local community agencies when appropriate.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY**

A student who successfully completes the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology is expected to be able to:

1. Communicate effectively orally and in writing
2. Collect or assemble sociologically relevant data on a given topic
3. Integrate data/materials from a variety of sources into a logical framework
4. Draw informed conclusions from assembled data/materials
5. Exercise a sociological imagination\*
6. Discuss other cultures and/or subcultures without demonstrating ethnocentrism.
7. Be aware of the pervasiveness of social change and of its causes and consequences

\* An awareness of the interconnections between larger social forces and the individual; an understanding of the impact of history on biography.

## **ASSESSING THE DEGREE PROGRAM**

In order to determine how successful the sociology program is at achieving the established objectives, several assessment measures have been included in each sociology major's requirements. Sociology majors must:

- a) earn a grade of C or better in both English 101 and 102
- b) earn a grade of C or better in one of the following applied speech courses:
  - COMM 201 - Interpersonal Communication
  - COMM 241 - Public Communication
- c) build a major portfolio to be used by the faculty to evaluate the program (more information about the sociology major portfolio can be in this handbook)
- d) prepare and make an oral presentation on the project completed in the required SOCY 498 Sociological Research Design and Analysis course
- e) complete an exit survey immediately prior to graduation

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS SOCIOLOGY MAJOR DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

The following pages describe the requirements for the degree in sociology. Majors must maintain an advisement check sheet for the appropriate academic year (available on the Department of Sociology website) as he/she progresses through the program. **The check sheet should be updated regularly and is to be used to plan class schedules for new semesters before meeting with an academic advisor during priority or open registration periods. Even though, the student's academic advisor will also maintain a check sheet in the student's advisement file, the student is ultimately responsible for monitoring his/her progress toward the degree.**

**Transfer credit** for students coming into the USC System from other accredited colleges/universities will be evaluated by the USCA academic unit heads. The chair of the Sociology Department will review transcripts of sociology coursework completed at other institutions to determine transferability.

In the section which follows, more specific information is presented about the course selections in each of the General Education groups and the major.

## **GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN CULTURES AND THE PHYSICAL & NATURAL WORLD (35-37 HOURS)**

#### **1. Natural Sciences with Labs (8 hours)**

Two courses from biology, chemistry, astronomy, physics, or geology. Both courses must include a lab. The courses need not be from the same discipline.

#### **2. History of Civilization (3 hours)**

HIST 101 - Introduction to World Civilizations to 1750 *or* HIST 102 -Introduction to World Civilizations Since 1750

#### **3. Social and Behavioral Sciences (9 hours - at least two disciplines)**

Students must successfully complete three courses in at least two of the following Social/behavioral sciences: sociology; anthropology; geography; psychology; political science; and/or economics. SOCY 101 - Introductory Sociology and SOCY 240 - Social Problems are the only sociology courses that may be counted toward this requirement.

#### **4. Languages (6-8 hours)**

Students may choose from French, German, Spanish, or other language course sequence that may be specially offered by the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. A grade of "C" or better is required to progress from the first level to the second for all languages.

#### **Placement in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (French, German, and Spanish)**

Students beginning to study a new language enroll in 101. Students enrolling in a second language that they have previously studied (whether in high school or college) will be placed at the appropriate level based on previous second-language courses and grades. Students who place in

210 and pass the course with a "C" or better will have completed USC Aiken's languages requirement.

**5. Humanities (9 hours -at least two disciplines)**

Three humanities courses in at least two disciplines will satisfy this requirement. Courses may be selected from specified courses in the following disciplines: English literature; history; art history; music appreciation; philosophy (not PHIL 110); theater appreciation (ATHE 161); religion; humanities (HSSI); honors (AHON), and designated communications (last two digits of course number in 50s or 60s) and languages courses.

A listing of courses that will satisfy the humanities requirement is included in the *USCA Bulletin*. Students are to refer to that publication when selecting coursework which will fulfill the humanities general education requirement.

**B. INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS (16 HOURS)**

**1. Critical Inquiry--AFCI 101 (1 hour)**

New first year students must take Critical Inquiry their first semester of enrollment at USCA. Transfer students are not required to take the Critical Inquiry course.

**2. English (6 hours)**

ENGL 101 and 102 must be taken for this group. A grade of "C" or higher is required in each course. A student may not take ENGL 102 without first earning a C or better in ENGL 101.

**3. Oral Communication (3 hours) Grade of "C" or better is required. Choose from:**

COMM 201 -Interpersonal Communications  
COMM 241 -Public Speaking

**4. Math/Statistics/Logic (6 hours)**

The mathematics placement test is required for incoming students who plan to enroll in AMTH 108 (Applied College Algebra) or above (students who have scored a 3, 4, or 5 on the Educational Testing Service Calculus Advanced Placement (AP) are exempt). AMTH 108 is a prerequisite for PSYC 325 (Quantitative Analysis in the Behavioral Sciences) or STAT 201 (Elementary Statistics) one of which is a required course for sociology majors. If a sociology major chooses not to take the placement test, her/his initial math course will AMTH 104 (Mathematics for Practical Purposes). Mathematics courses lower than AMTH 108 (e.g., AMTH 104) will count as free elective credit sociology majors. For more information on the mathematics placement test, see the relevant section in the *USCA Bulletin*.

a. Sociology majors are required to complete PSYC 325 -- Quantitative Analysis in the Behavioral Sciences or STAT 201-- Elementary Statistics with a grade of C or better. Students must satisfy specified prerequisites the course (typically completion of AMTH 108 or placement above AMTH 108).

b. A logic (APHY 110) or math course (AMTH 108 or higher\*) may be used to fulfill the

remaining three hours of this category. Important notes: AMTH 108 is a prerequisite for taking PSYC 225 or STAT 201; AMTH 221 or AMTH 222 may not be used to fulfill this requirement.

## **5. Proficiency Portfolio in Writing**

All USC Aiken students must submit a writing proficiency portfolio. (This is not the same as the *Sociology Major Portfolio*.) Each student must submit a writing proficiency portfolio as soon as possible after the completion of sixty credit hours. Transfer students who have reached the sixty-hour level through transfer credit from other institutions are allowed 30 hours of residency at USC Aiken to build their portfolios. The submission due dates are listed on each Fall, Spring, and Summer I academic calendars and can also be found on the Writing Room website.

It is important that students refer the *USCA Bulletin* and instructions accompanying the required Proficiency Portfolio Packet (available in the USCA Bookstore) for details on the compilation and submission of the writing proficiency portfolio. Writing Room staff are available to answer further questions and to provide technical assistance.

Those students who have demonstrated competency in university-level writing will be certified as having met USC Aiken's expectations. Those students whose portfolios do not meet expectations will be required to enroll in and pass ENGL 201- Writing in the University with a "C" or better.

## **6. Writing Intensive Coursework**

After successful completion of ENGL 101 and 102, students will complete 3 courses officially designated as writing intensive (WI) – a minimum of one course each year until 3 have been completed. Transfer students will take one WI course for each 30 credit hours taken at USC Aiken. ENGL 201 cannot be used to satisfy this requirement. Students must take a minimum of one WI course within their major.

Sociology majors will take three WI courses in the major: SOCY 248—Sociological Inquiry and Measurement, SOCY 410—Social Demography and SOCY 498-- Sociological Research Design & Analysis.

## **PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (3 HOURS)**

### **7. American Political Institutions (3 hours)**

Choose from: POLI 201 - American National Government, HIST 201 - History of the United States from Discovery to 1865, or HIST 202 -History of the United States from 1865 to the Present.

### **8. Intercultural Curricular Enrichment (ICE) Program**

Student participation in the ICE Program is among the requirements for graduation from USC Aiken. Students are required to attend approved events that include lectures, performances, films, concerts, and exhibits. ICE Program is designed to support USC Aiken's goal to produce "engaged learners and principled citizens" by broadening students' cultural and intellectual perspectives.

Requirement: USC Aiken undergraduate students who are admitted in Fall 2009 and thereafter will attend at least 2 ICE events per academic semester up to a total of 16 over their 4-year college career. Students will not be approved to receive their degree until they have met the ICE requirement.

## **Cognate, Minor, Double Major, or Second Degree**

### **The Cognate** (12 hours)

The cognate is a minimum of 12 semester hours of coursework designed to support the major. Cognate courses may be selected from upper-level (300+) humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural/physical sciences, mathematics, and/or business disciplines and must be approved by the student's advisor (nursing and education courses cannot be used for the cognate).

The cognate may be comprised of coursework in as many as four disciplines or only one discipline.

Each cognate course must be completed with a grade of "C" or better.

### **The Minor** (usually 18 hours)

In place of a cognate a student may elect to complete a minor consisting of 18 hours (usually) of credit in prescribed coursework. The minor is intended to develop a coherent core of basic preparation in a second area of study. It is different from the cognate in that the courses must be concentrated in one area. A list of the minors available at USC Aiken are listed in the *USCA Bulletin* and the specific requirements each minor are listed in that publication under the School or Department that offers it.

Courses applied toward general education requirements cannot be applied to the minor. No course may satisfy both major and minor requirements. A grade of "C" or higher is required in each minor course.

### **Double Major**

A number of sociology majors will opt to complete a double major. A double major consists of the complete fulfillment of all requirements for one degree and all the major course requirements of a second. For double majors, the cognate or minor requirement for the degree in sociology is satisfied by the second major. Depending on the second discipline selected, it may be possible to complete all requirements both majors within the 120 credit hour graduation requirement. The *USCA Bulletin* or an academic advisor should be consulted for additional information.

Students who wish to pursue a double major must complete a change of program at the Office of Advisement in order that he/she may be assigned an academic advisor in each major area

Note that a double major is not the same as a "second degree" or a "dual degree." See below.

### **Second Undergraduate Degree**

A minimum of 24 hours of coursework beyond the degree requirements for the first degree are required for a second baccalaureate degree. In all cases, the student must complete all requirements for both degrees. In most cases, students wanting to major in two areas, it is advisable to opt for the "second major" (discussed above), not a second undergraduate degree. The *USCA Bulletin* and an academic advisor should be contacted additional information.



### **Free Electives** (11-25 hours)

Sociology majors are limited to using no more than six hours of sociology course credit as elective credit. No more than six hours of activities courses and no more than four hours for performing in University ensembles may be counted toward the degree.

Students may elect to take up to eight free elective courses on the Pass/Fail grading program. The only grades assigned on courses taken under the Pass/Fail option are "S" for satisfactory and unsatisfactory. The student will be given the hour credit for courses in which an "S" is earned, but it will not be computed into the GPA.

Students have until the last day to withdraw from a course to elect the Pass/Fail option. Those who are interested in taking course on this grading system should ask the professor teaching the course what numerical value (or other criteria) will be used to assign a satisfactory grade. For example, some professors may consider 65 percent satisfactory performance while other professors, at their discretion, may require a 70 percent or higher to be "satisfactory."

Approval to elect the Pass/Fail option must be obtained from the student's academic advisor and department chair. Students whose semester or cumulative GPA is less than 2.0 are not eligible to elect the Pass/Fail option. Other specific information about this grading option can be found in the *USCA Bulletin*.

### **MAJOR REQUIREMENTS** (33-36 hours)

All major courses must be completed with a grade of "C" or higher. A "C" or better in SOCY 101 is a prerequisite for all upper-level sociology courses. Major courses may be repeated only once. Prerequisites for SOCY 310 and SOCY 498 include the successful completion of the Rising Jr. Writing Proficiency Portfolio or ENGL 201. Sociology majors are required to choose one of three options: Criminology and Criminal Justice, Human Services, or General.

Sociology core requirements for all majors include SOCY 101-Introduction to Sociology (offered every major semester and usually in the summer), SOCY 248 – Sociological Inquiry and Measurement (offered every Fall semester and occasionally in the Spring), SOCY 410 - Social Demography (offered every fall

semester and usually in the spring). SOCY 420 - Individual and Society (offered every semester and occasionally in the summer), and SOCY 498 - Sociological Research Design and Analysis (offered every spring semester and usually in the fall). It is important that students recognize when these courses are typically offered when developing their degree plan:

	<b><u>Semester Offered</u></b>		
	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>
SOCY 101 - <i>Introduction to Sociology</i>	Yes	Yes	Usually
SOCY 240 - <i>Sociological Inquiry &amp; Measurement</i>	Yes	Occasionally	No
SOCY 410 - <i>Social Demography</i>	Yes	Usually	No
SOCY 420 - <i>Individual and Society</i>	Yes	Yes	Occasionally
SOCY 498 - <i>Sociological Research Design &amp; Analysis</i>	Usually	Yes	No

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**Criminology and Criminal Justice Option** (36 hours)

Core Requirements

SOCY 101 -Introductory Sociology  
SOCY 248 –Sociological Inquiry and Measurement  
SOCY 410 -Social Demography  
SOCY 420 -Individual and Society  
SOCY 498 -Sociological Research Design and Analysis

Concentration Requirements

- a) CRJU 171 Introduction to Criminal Justice
- b) Four of the following sociology courses, including at least one 500-level seminar course and SOCY 350 or SOCY 353 or both.

SOCY 350 - Sociology of Delinquent Youth Behavior  
SOCY 351- Urban Sociology  
SOCY 353 - Sociology of Crime  
SOCY 354 - Crime: Myths and Misconceptions  
SOCY 355 - Minority Group Relations  
SOCY 356 - Sociology of Law  
SOCY 358 - Sociology of Corrections  
SOCY 359 - Police and Society  
SOCY 400 - Internship in a Criminal Justice Agency  
SOCY 404 - Social Stratification  
SOCY 405 - Drugs and Society  
SOCY 430 - Youth and Society  
SOCY 490 - Special Topics (as designated for the concentration)  
SOCY 496 - Sociological Theory  
SOCY 523 - Sociology of Deviance  
SOCY 525 - Race, Class, Gender, Crime and Justice  
SOCY 535 – Girls’ Delinquency  
SOCY 540 - Criminological Theory  
SOCY 598 - Special Topics (as designated for the concentration)

- c) One additional 300,400 or 500 level sociology course.
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**Human Services Option** (36 hours)

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### Core Requirements

SOCY 101 - Introductory Sociology  
SOCY 248 –Sociological Inquiry and Measurement  
SOCY 410 -Social Demography  
SOCY 420 -Individual and Society  
SOCY 498 -Sociological Research Design and Analysis

### Concentration Requirements

- a) HMSV 201 -Introduction to Human Services  
b) Four of the following sociology courses, at least one 500-level seminar course

SOCY 301 - Sociology of Gender Roles  
SOCY 305 - Sociology of the Family  
SOCY 341 - Sociology of Death and Dying  
SOCY 351 - Urban Sociology  
SOCY 355 - Minority Group Relations  
SOCY 360 - Sociology of Medicine and Health  
SOCY 370 - Sociology of Mental Health  
SOCY 400 - Internship in a Human Services agency  
SOCY 404 - Social Stratification  
SOCY 405 - Drugs and Society  
SOCY 430 - Youth and Society  
SOCY 468 - Sex and Society  
SOCY 490 - Special Topics (as designated for the concentration)  
SOCY 496 - Sociological Theory  
SOCY 510 - Global Social Issues  
SOCY 523 - Sociology of Deviance  
SOCY 528 - Family Diversity  
SOCY 535 – Girls’ Delinquency  
SOCY 598 - Special Topics (as designated for the concentration)

- c) One additional 300, 400, or 500 level sociology course.
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### **The General Sociology Option** (33 hours)

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Core Requirements

SOCY 101 - Introductory Sociology

SOCY 248 –Sociological Inquiry and Measurement

SOCY 410 -Social Demography

SOCY 420 -Individual and Society

SOCY 498 -Sociological Research Design and Analysis

Concentration Requirements

Five additional sociology courses, 300-level or above, including at least one 500-level seminar course.

## ADVISEMENT AND REGISTRATION

Each semester students must be advised and register for a set of courses required to complete the degree (see degree requirements in this Handbook or *USCA Bulletin*). A student will register just before classes begin in his/her first semester at USCA. Subsequently, the student should be advised and register for courses during the priority registration period (early November for Spring semesters and early April for Summer and Fall terms). It is important that students take advantage of priority registration. Often times, classes are full by the time open registration occurs which is just before classes begin.

### Advisement

Sociology majors will be assigned to an academic advisor who, typically, is a faculty member in the Department of Sociology. The advisor is familiar with the requirements for the degree and is available to answer questions and provide guidance. Advisors post office hours on their office doors and students should feel free to stop by during those hours. If the announced office hours do not fit your schedule, call or email your advisor or leave a message for him/her and ask for an appointment at a mutually convenient time.

#### **STEP 1. Make an appointment to see your academic advisor.**

Before registering for courses, students must see their academic advisors for approval of their course selections. Advisors usually post appointment sheets on their office doors several days or a week in advance of the beginning of the advisement period. Students are to sign up for a time on their assigned advisor's appointment sheet. Students are obliged to keep the appointment time with their advisor, if an unforeseen event prevents a student from keeping his/her appointment time, it is expected that the student will extend the courtesy of informing the advisor as soon as possible before the appointment time.

#### **STEP 2. Plan your schedule for the next semester.**

Students are expected to be aware of degree requirements and their progress toward the degree and, prior to seeing their academic advisor, plan a tentative class schedule of classes they plan to take during the next semester. The course acronym, 3-digit course number, meeting days and times, and course reference number (CRN) for each course need to be included in the tentative schedule. Also two or three alternate courses should be determined in the event that first choices are full. Students are to use the **Advisement Check Sheet** to keep track of the courses completed and courses in which the student is currently enrolled. The academic advisor will also maintain a record of this, but it is the student's responsibility to keep track of his/her progress.

#### **STEP 3. See your advisor.**

For the advisement appointment, students are expected to:

- a) Be on time.
- b) Bring a pen.
- c) Bring the tentative schedule worked out in Step #2 above.

### Answers To Commonly Asked Questions Concerning Advisement

**Q:** If I'm supposed to know what I need to take, why should I see my advisor at all?

**A:** Your advisor will serve as a “double check” to your interpretation of which courses remain to be taken. Also, your advisor is likely to be aware of specific points which you may not know about, but which could affect your progress toward graduation. For example, your advisor may know that a course you must take is only offered every other or every third semester and if you don’t take that course in a semester when it is offered, you may have to wait a year or year and half before that course is offered again. This could delay your graduation. Also, courses and academic regulations may change, and these changes may not show up in the *USCA Bulletin* in time for you to make decisions.

**Q:** My schedule and my advisor’s schedule are in conflict and I can never get an appointment to see my advisor at a time that meets my needs. What am I supposed to do?

**A:** If you have made a serious effort to see your advisor, but have been unsuccessful, see the chair of the Sociology Department for help. If finding a mutually agreeable time continues to be a problem for more than one semester, you may request a new advisor. This is done through the Advisement Center in Room 108H of the Penland Administration Building or by going directly to the Sociology Department faculty member who you would like to have as your new advisor. The option of changing advisors is also available for other reasons. No advisor in the Sociology Department is going to be upset with a student who changes to another advisor whatever the reason. It is not a good idea, however, to change frequently, since continuity with the same advisor provides the opportunity for the advisor to get to know your goals and plans and to provide better advice as a result.

## **Registration**

Following the meeting with the academic advisor and completion of the Advisement Form which indicates his/her approval of course selections, students will register on their own through the Self Service Carolina (SSC) system.

## **What To Do If a Class is Full (Closed) or Has Been Cancelled?**

- a) If there are multiple sections of the course offered, meaning that the course is offered at several different times, students may choose a section which is still open. It is not necessary to obtain the academic advisor’s permission to do this.
- b) If there are no other open sections of the course, the student may enroll in one of the alternate courses which were approved by the academic advisor.
- c) If neither of the above is available, the student may contact the Chair or Dean of the Department or School that offers the closed class to see whether an “override” is possible or see the academic advisor for approval of some other course.

**It is very important that the student does not enroll in a course without advisor approval.** Students who have done this have, on occasion, made serious mistakes which delayed their graduation.

## **Dropping and Adding Classes**

## **Dropping Classes**

If a student decides that he/she registered for too many classes for the semester or sees that he/she is headed for failure in a particular class, he/she should see an academic advisor and drop one or more of the classes.

During the first week of classes, a student may drop a course without having the course appear on the student's transcript. After the first week of classes, a student may still drop a course without a grade penalty up through the final withdrawal date. The final withdrawal date is included on the Academic Calendar which is available on the USCA website.

Dropping or withdrawing from a course requires an advisement form and the signature of the academic advisor. Student then may use SSC to drop the course(s) on their own.

## **Adding Classes**

Students must see their academic advisor to add a course or replace a course that is being dropped. Classes can be added during the first week of classes, but not after that time.



## Nearing Graduation

### Graduation Application

During the student's penultimate (second to last) semester, he/she must apply for graduation. Graduation applications are obtained and filled out by the student in the Records Office (108A Penland Administration Building). The Records Office will retain one copy of the application. The student will deliver the application package which will include an academic transcript generated by the Records Office to his/her academic advisor for further processing.

The graduation application deadline for each semester is included on the Academic Calendar. **Students are to assume full responsibility for remembering to apply for graduation and completing the process. Advisors are not obligated to remind students about this requirement.**

### Senior Exit Survey

Near the end of the student's final semester before graduation, he/she will receive a letter from the Chair of the Department and a Sociology Major Exit Survey. Survey information is used by Department Faculty to assess and further develop the program. Majors are required to complete the survey as a part of their graduation requirements.

### Grade Point Average (GPA)

A USCA System GPA of 2.0 or higher is required for graduation. If a student's System GPA is lower than 2.0, he/she will not graduate even though all course work has been completed for the degree. Also, depending on how many grade hours have been accumulated, the student may be subject to suspension from the university. See the *USCA Bulletin* for more information on suspension and probation levels.

## The Sociology Major Portfolio

A major portfolio will be created for each sociology major. The portfolio will consist of the major projects completed for the co-capstone courses in the Sociology program, SOCY 410—Social Demography and SOCY 498—Sociological Research Design and Analysis.

Faculty in the department use the portfolios to assess the Sociology degree program. The sociology Major Portfolio is not used to evaluate individual students and it should not be confused with the Proficiency Portfolio in Writing. Information about the objectives and procedures associated with the Proficiency Portfolio in Writing can be found in this handbook under General Education Requirements and in the *USCA Bulletin*.

### Constructing the Sociology Major Portfolio

An individual student's portfolio is made up of the major projects the student has completed for SOCY 310 and SOCY 497. For each of these classes, the student will be required to submit two copies of the projects completed for this course at the time and/or intervals determined by the professor instructing the course. Ideally, the student will label the copy as "portfolio copy." The professor will transfer one copy to the office on campus that maintains portfolio files. The other copy will be graded by the professor as usual.

The following information answers some commonly asked questions about the Sociology Major Portfolio.

**Q:** *Why are portfolios required for sociology majors?*

**A:** The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education and USC Aiken's accreditation association (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) require that all academic programs be evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis. The faculty in the Department of Sociology have developed a set of measures for program assessment which includes the review of portfolios of students' work.

**Q:** How will these portfolios be used? If mine is weak, could it keep me from graduating?

**A:** It is important to understand that the major portfolio is used to evaluate the sociology program, not individual students. Portfolios will be evaluated after the students graduate. Normally the content of the portfolio itself will not cause the individual student to gain or lose anything. Reviewers will examine the contents of the portfolios for how well students:

- 1) Communicate in writing
- 2) Collect or assemble sociologically relevant data on a given topic
- 3) Integrate data/materials from a variety of sources into a logical framework
- 4) Draw informed conclusions from assembled data/materials
- 5) Exercise a sociological imagination\*
- 6) Discuss other cultures and/or subcultures without demonstrating ethnocentrism
- 7) Be aware of the pervasiveness of social change and of its causes and consequences

\*An awareness of the interconnections between larger social forces and the individual; an understanding of the impact of history on biography.

If most portfolios reviewed indicate that sociology majors have these abilities, it indicates that the program is effective at achieving its goals. If the papers/projects included in many of the portfolios do not demonstrate such skills, it will indicate that there is a problem with the design of the program. In that case, the program will be revised in an effort to improve its effectiveness.

### **Important Final Note on the Sociology Major Portfolio**

Professors will guide the student in all steps in the portfolio process. It is important for students to remember that, unlike the Proficiency Portfolio in Writing, they are not being individually graded or evaluated, therefore cannot “fail” in the process. However, the Sociology major portfolio is a graduation requirement. Students who fail to submit faculty-designated items for inclusion in the portfolio will either not pass the course or will not officially graduate.

