Why Study Sociology?

What is sociology?

Sociology is the scientific study of human social relationships and structures. Like biologists and other natural scientists, sociologists work by sets of rules through which they evaluate the arguments and evidence generated by empirical research. This doesn't mean sociological work is either narrow or lacking in practical significance. Our techniques range from computer simulation through survey research to participant observation of urban street corner life. Styles among sociologists vary from the scientific to the humanistic, from the applied to the theoretical.

Sociology involves the observation and explanation of human behavior in a wide variety of areas. In addition to the specialties of social psychology, political sociology, and mathematical sociology, which have obvious ties to other social sciences, sociologists study such things as race relations, social stratification, the family, the community, ethnic minorities, sex roles, drugs, crime, population, leisure, sport, aging, mass media, developing nations, organizational structure, communication in small groups and in dyads.

Is sociology for you?

If you are actively concerned about the world you live in and want to do something constructive and useful in it - whether in law, business, education, medicine, urban or rural planning, etc. - sociology provides our best means for understanding how "the system" works. Whether you want to change society radically, modify it, preserve it as it is, or restore it to a bygone era, you must first understand what the structure of system is, how social order is maintained, and how social change can be affected. Sociology can give you some of that knowledge and can further help you acquire the analytic tools to develop it on your own.

What can you do with it?

1. Social problems orientation: Many public or nonprofit agencies, governmental bureaus, and community programs hire applied sociologists.

2. Research orientation: Many organizations utilize majors who have emphasized sociological methodology and social statistics.

3. Sociology as a pre-professional background:
4. Sociology as background training for various general institutional (or anti-institutional) skills: social service administration, program and policy planning, community development, program and policy evaluation, organizational consulting, small group management and leadership.

5. Becoming a professional sociologist: This requires a Ph.D. with rare exceptions. Most sociology majors do not become professional sociologists, although a substantial number of our graduates have gone to graduate programs either in sociology or related professional fields. More than half of all professional sociologists are employed in academic settings, engaged in various combinations of teaching and research. But a large minority work elsewhere.

In the federal government, sociologists work as demographers for the Department of Labor or Census Bureau; survey study directors for Department of Labor, Office on Aging, Office of Education, National Institute of Drug Abuse, Department of Justice, or Law Enforcement Assistance Administration; legislative consultants; rural sociologists for U.S. Department of Agriculture; program evaluators for ACTION or Office of Economic Opportunity; regional researchers for State Department; analysts of school desegregation for Department of Education.

**In addition to courses, what does the department offer?**

The sociology department offers a variety of activities. Some result in credit such as being a teaching assistant or working as a research assistant. Research activities range from library research to data preparation and analysis for ongoing faculty and faculty-student projects. Students qualified for the work study program can almost always find jobs in the department. Membership in Alpha Kappa Delta, the sociology national honorary society, is awarded to those who excel academically.