

Sociology

The study of sociology began at Oberlin in the 1890's, making Oberlin one of the first colleges in the country to offer such instruction. In keeping with that early pioneering spirit in the discipline, the faculty endeavors to maintain the department's program on the growing edge of knowledge in essential fields of study.

The sociology curriculum is concerned with the systematic study of social phenomena - the self, groups, community solidarity, economic and political behavior, inequality, culture and values, social organization, and institutions in societies of various types and levels of development. The question of how groups and societies and larger social systems change or remain the same over time frames work in the discipline. The department's curriculum reflects the breadth of the discipline and responds to the variety of student interests. As such, coursework and research opportunities can be found in areas such as racial and ethnic relations, gender stratification, the family, urban studies, social change, social stratification, criminology, delinquency, social psychology, comparative and historical analysis, the sociology of law, politics, work, and methods and statistics. We offer opportunities for independent research, work with faculty on their research, and field internships.

The department attracts large numbers of students. The great majority seek preparation for graduate and professional training to pursue careers in academic instruction and research, law, social policy and health, social work, research in private and governmental organizations, business administration, and urban planning. Graduate and professional schools and employers have enthusiastically opened their doors to our majors, and our graduates do very well in the competition for fellowships and assistantships in graduate schools. Large numbers of them have gone on to achieve impressive professional and academic careers, and are located in important positions at different levels of community, organizational, and governmental life.

Sociological training in the department gives particular attention to the four core analytic areas in sociology: social organizations and institutions, social inequality and stratification, micro-sociology, and historical and

comparative study of social change. The emphasis on analysis is supplemented by numerous opportunities for students to engage in research. Our students have access to the Social Science Data Lab computers, software, and numerous data sets. In addition, Oberlin's excellent library and computer facilities enable students to engage in independent research and receive practical methodological training. Such rigorous training serves as a strong component of the liberal arts education that is central to the Oberlin heritage.

Each year a number of outstanding majors are invited into the honors program. An honors student works closely with a faculty member in designing and carrying out an independent research project. In recent years, students have done research on topics as varied as juveniles and the court system, health and the African American community, education and low income students, an ethnographic exploration of racism and whiteness, social sources of mental depression among women, and an analysis of the legal, political, and social implications of the non-surgical abortion pill.

Oberlin provides numerous opportunities for off-campus study. Many majors in the department have studied in Great Lakes Colleges Association programs at African and European universities and at the Philadelphia Urban Center Semester. Winter Term (the month of January) is a time when majors may obtain valuable off-campus experiences working in community and private agencies and in a wide variety of human relations settings.

Members of the faculty are all involved in on-going research and writing projects. These enrich their teaching and bring distinction to the department. Recent projects have included analyzing racial and ethnic identity formation, researching low income housing and social movements in cities of Brazil, diversity and political action in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, identity among 2nd generation Americans, and nationalism and its development in Eastern Europe. Students who elect to major in the department have many options. They may focus their studies in the department in a particular area of sociology. They may also choose to relate studies in the department to other

programs. For example, students often have majors or follow a major-minor sequence with the disciplines of politics, history, psychology, and religion, or interdisciplinary fields such as African American studies, gender and women's studies, Latin American studies, and Law and Society.

It is plain to see that the Sociology Department covers a spectrum of ideas. Faculty members take an active and personal interest in the exciting challenges of student learning, as well as in the full development of students as persons. If you have questions or desire further information, please write to Daphne John, Chair and Associate Professor, Sociology Department, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio 44074.

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