

SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT 2005

Department of Sociology and Social Work

Overview of Assessment Process

The Sociology Assessment Plan, approved by the college Assessment Committee in September 2003, calls for three types of assessment measures: performance measures, student self-reports, and alumni self-reports. Data collection continues to rely most heavily on student self-reports, but the number of direct performance measures gathered did improve from 2004 to 2005. Data collection strategies are reviewed below.

Performance Measures

The design of the sociology major assessment calls for direct assessment of student learning from three required upper-level courses: Soc 318 Social Theory, Soc 320 Research Methods, and Soc 395 Sociology Integrative Seminar. Faculty members teaching these courses are asked to develop an essential course assignment to assess one or more program objectives. Direct performance measures were gathered in Soc 320 and Soc 395 relating to five of the seven program objectives (objectives 3-7). As yet, no performance measures have been collected from Soc 318.

Sociology Major Exit Survey

As in 2004, a primary source of assessment data for 2005 comes from student self-reports on the Sociology Major Exit Survey. The survey assesses program objectives in two ways. First, multi-item questions allow the computation of composite scores for seven components of the sociology program: theoretical perspectives, concepts, history, Reformed Christian integration, human diversity, research methods, and communication skills. Second, students reported levels of agreement /disagreement to six statements corresponding to program objectives. Additional survey questions gathered ratings of required courses, demographic information on students, and qualitative responses on strengths and weaknesses of the program. The survey was administered to fifteen graduating seniors enrolled in Soc 395 during Spring 2005.

Sociology Alumni Survey

There is no current alumni survey.

Findings

Performance measures and student self-reports give strong overall indication that the sociology program is meeting its stated objectives. The average scores for students on assignments related to the Reformed perspective (objective 3), social justice (objective 4), research methods (objective 6), and communication (objective 7) all surpassed 80 percent. The performance measure for human diversity (objective 5) was only slightly lower at 72.7. There were no substantial differences in mean scores between 2004 and 2005. In general, students demonstrated effective performance in fulfillment of program objectives 3-7.

Students' self-reports tell a similar story about perceived learning, as evidenced in findings from the Sociology Major Exit Survey. More than 70 percent of students responded affirmatively about the level of learning in areas of theory (Q1), concepts (Q2), human diversity and social justice (Q5), research skills (Q6), Reformed Christian perspective (Q4), and communication skills (Q7). Mean scores for these areas range from 5.76 to 6.06, where 1=weak overall rating of understanding or ability and 7=strong overall rating of understanding or ability. Especially noteworthy is the self-assessed understanding of sociological theory. Graduating seniors in 2005 felt more favorably about their understanding of theory (mean=5.76) than did graduating seniors in 2004 (mean=4.67).

When asked specifically about how well the sociology program met its learning objectives, students responded positively (mean score of 5 or above) for all seven objectives. As in 2004, students' highest praise was for the teaching of social justice and human diversity (objectives 4 and 5). Qualitative comments also acknowledged the emphasis on diversity and faculty members' commitment to justice as strengths of the program.

Two areas of the sociology program were not perceived as highly however. First, the program does not seem to provide an adequate historical background to students on the development of sociology as a discipline. The composite score for history (Q3) was 4.96 as compared to mean scores above 5.76 in all other areas. Furthermore, the history objective—"I understand the history of sociology as a discipline" (objective 2)—received the lowest level of agreement of any program objective. Second, sociological theory remains a difficult area in the program for students. While mean scores for theoretical understanding improved from 2004 to 2005, students rated the theory course (Soc 318) lowest of any required course; qualitative comments also singled the course out as a weakness of the program. In addition, students indicated that their ability to integrate a Reformed Christian perspective with sociological theory (Q4f) was lower than for other major substantive areas of sociology, including research methods.

One other repeated suggestion voiced by graduating seniors was a desire to receive more assistance with post-graduate placement.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Given comparative data over two years, patterns of strengths and weaknesses within the sociology program emerge. Several recommendations follow from analysis of the patterns noted above.

1. Improve data collection so that all program objectives have both direct performance measures as well as indirect self-reports. There were improvements in this regard from 2004 to 2005. Still, direct performance data are needed from Soc 318 Sociological Theory. The department must attempt to gain greater commitment to and participation in assessment, especially among faculty teaching courses singled out for data collection (Soc 318, Soc 320, and Soc 395). The alumni survey also needs to be developed and implemented to assess the long-term impact of the sociology program.

2. Review the history objective of the sociology program. Is this objective necessary? If so, what systematic steps throughout the program need to be taken to improve student learning in this regard? Direct tests of student learning for the objective are also needed. The assessment plan calls for such measurement to within Soc 318 Sociological Theory. Here again, improved data collection is vital.
3. Examine the current structure and content of Soc 318 Sociological Theory. While students reported better understanding of sociological theory in 2004 than reported in 2005, students continue to express concern about the theory course. This course may never be a favorite among students due to the conceptually challenging nature of the material; however, the course should be a fruitful arena for considering the integration of faith and learning and recognized as valuable (albeit challenging) contribution to the major as a whole. This does not seem to be the case at present.
4. Begin discussions about how best to prepare students majoring in sociology for life beyond Calvin College. Questions of career and employment commonly ring from students first exposed to sociology. Many of these students may end up in social work as opposed to sociology as a result of perceived employment potential. The sociology program needs to be ready to answer the question: What can I do with sociology? The developing internship program within the department may help address this question. It may also be useful to conceive of ways to make larger discussions of vocation more central throughout the sociology curriculum. The topic of vocation is at the heart of many departments' integrative studies course. Perhaps the senior seminar in sociology (Soc 395) should build more directly upon the topic as well.

Prepared by Kevin D. Dougherty/Cheryl K. Brandsen
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Sociology Program Assessment Report 2005

Assessment Coordinator: Kevin D. Dougherty; Cheryl K. Brandsen

MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the sociology program is to prepare students to work as agents of renewal effecting the restoration of local to global socio-cultural systems within the context of a Reformed-Christian, liberal arts education and guided by sociological and anthropological conceptual framework that is grounded in an empirical research base.

ASSESSMENT:

Objectives Each sociology graduate who completes the program will acquire the following knowledge and skills.	Assessment Methods	Results
1. Understand the perspectives, theories and concepts of sociology. (Knowledge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Essential assignment or test item in Soc 318 Sociological Theory. (Course faculty to provide using Assessment Form; collected every semester Soc 318 is taught and aggregated annually) b. Sociology Major Exit Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q1 a. Theory composite score (1=limited understanding to 7=very good understanding) • Q2. Concept composite score (1=limited understanding to 7=very good understanding) • Q9. I understand the basic perspectives, theories and concepts of sociology (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) c. Sociology Alumni Survey (mean score on 7-point Likert scale for selected item/s, timing of data collection to be determined) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Not collected for 2003-2005 b. Collected 2004 and 2005 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04SP: Mean=4.67 (St. Dev.=1.84) • 05SP: Mean=5.76 (St. Dev.=1.13) • 04SP: Mean=5.98 (St. Dev.=.54) • 05SP: Mean=5.95 (St. Dev.=.92) • 04SP: Mean=6.57 (St. Dev.=.53) • 05SP: Mean=6.20 (St. Dev.=1.08) c. Not collected, 2003-2005

<p>2. Understand the general contours of the history of social thought and the history of the discipline of sociology. (Knowledge)</p>	<p>a. Essential assignment or test item in Soc 318 Sociological Theory. (Course faculty to provide using Assessment Form; collected every semester Soc 318 is taught and aggregated annually)</p> <p>b. Sociology Major Exit Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q3. History composite score (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability) • Q9b. I understand the history of sociology as a discipline (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) <p>c. Sociology Alumni Survey (mean score on 7-point Likert scale for selected item/s, timing of data collection to be determined)</p>	<p>a. Not collected, 2003-2005</p> <p>b. Collected 2004 and 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04SP: Mean=5.16 (St. Dev.=1.32) • 05SP: Mean=4.97 (St. Dev.=.93) • 04SP: Mean=5.36 (St. Dev.=1.18) • 05SP: Mean=5.00 (St. Dev.=1.13) <p>c. Not collected, 2003-2005</p>
<p>3. Integrate a Reformed Christian perspective with the knowledge, skills and values of sociology. (Knowledge)</p>	<p>a. Soc 395 Reflection Paper. Students write an essay in response to a thematic question on the reformational worldview and its relationship to sociology. Evaluation is based upon reasoning, use of Biblical themes, use of historical/structural analysis, contextualization of Reformed Christianity, and explanation of engagement (see Appendix B).</p> <p>b. Sociology Major Exit Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q4. Integration composite score (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability) • Q9c. I am able to integrate a Reformed Christian perspective with the knowledge, skills and values of sociology (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) <p>c. Sociology Alumni Survey (mean score on 7-point Likert scale for selected item/s, timing of data collection to be determined)</p>	<p>a. Collected Spring 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean=84.7 out of 100 <p>b. Collected 2004 and 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04SP: Mean=5.97 (St. Dev.=.80) • 05SP: Mean=6.00 (St. Dev.=1.08) • 04SP: Mean=6.28 (St. Dev.=.75) • 05SP: Mean=6.20 (St. Dev.=1.21) <p>c. Not collected, 2003-2005</p>

<p>4. Understand conceptions of social justice and reconciliation as they relate to socio-cultural systems, local to global. (Knowledge)</p>	<p>a. Soc 395 Reflection Paper. Students write an essay in response to a thematic question on social justice and reformational worldview. Evaluation is based upon reasoning, use of Biblical themes, use of historical/structural analysis, contextualization of Reformed Christianity, and explanation of engagement (see Appendix B).</p> <p>b. Sociology Major Exit Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q9d. I understand conceptions of social justice and reconciliation as they relate to local and global settings (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) <p>c. Sociology Alumni Survey (mean score on 7-point Likert scale for selected item/s, timing of data collection to be determined)</p>	<p>a. Collected 2004 and 2005 04SP: Mean=79.0 out of 100 05SP: Mean=81.1 out of 100</p> <p>b. Collected 2004 and 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04SP: Mean=6.50 (St. Dev.=.76) 05SP: Mean=6.33 (St. Dev.=1.05) <p>c. Not collected, 2003-2005</p>
<p>5. Develop critical awareness of perspectives on and issues relating to human diversity. (Knowledge)</p>	<p>a. Soc 395 Reflection Paper. Students write an essay in response to a thematic question on human diversity and reformational worldview. Evaluation is based upon reasoning, use of Biblical themes, use of historical/structural analysis, contextualization of Reformed Christianity, and explanation of engagement (see Appendix B).</p> <p>b. Sociology Major Exit Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q5. Diversity composite score (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability) • Q9e. I possess a critical awareness of perspectives on and issues relating to human diversity (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) <p>c. Sociology Alumni Survey (mean score on 7-point Likert scale for selected item/s, timing of data collection to be determined)</p>	<p>a. Collected 2004 and 2005 04SP: Mean=74.7 out of 100 05SP: Mean=72.7 out of 100</p> <p>b. Collected 2004 and 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04SP: Mean=6.41 (St. Dev.=.49) 05SP: Mean=6.06 (St. Dev.=.84) • 04SP: Mean=6.28 (St. Dev.=.75) 05SP: Mean=6.40 (St. Dev.=.83) <p>c. Not collected, 2003-2005</p>

<p>6. Use basic empirical sociological research skills, as well as evaluate research studies. (Skill)</p>	<p>a. Soc 320 Final Research Project. Students work in teams to define a problem, review professional literature, propose a methodology, collect data and enter it into SPSS, run statistical tests, produce findings, and discuss conclusions. A written report and oral presentation constitutes the final project.</p> <p>b. Sociology Major Exit Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q6. Research composite score (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability) • Q9f. I am able to use basic computing and statistical skills, as well as evaluate research studies (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) <p>c. Sociology Alumni Survey (mean score on 7-point Likert scale for selected item/s, timing of data collection to be determined)</p>	<p>a. Collected Fall 2003 to Spring 2005</p> <p>03FL: Mean=86.9 out of 100 04SP: Mean=88.1 out of 100 04FL: Mean=87.0 out of 100 05SP: Mean=91.8 out of 100</p> <p>b. Collected 2004 and 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04SP: Mean=5.74 (St. Dev.=.73) • 05SP: Mean=5.77 (St. Dev.=1.06) • 04SP: Mean=5.78 (St. Dev.=.70) • 05SP: Mean=5.73 (St. Dev.=1.28) <p>c. Not collected, 2003-2005</p>
<p>7. Use writing and other communication skills to effectively convey sociological knowledge to diverse audiences. (Skill)</p>	<p>a. Soc 395 Final Presentation. Fifteen-minute public presentation of original research. Evaluated on content, organization, and delivery.</p> <p>b. Sociology Major Exit Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q7. Communication composite score (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability) • Q9g. I am able to convey sociological knowledge to diverse audiences through writing and other forms of communication (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) <p>c. Sociology Alumni Survey (mean score on 7-point Likert scale for selected item/s, timing of data collection to be determined)</p>	<p>a. Collected 2004 and 2005</p> <p>04SP: Mean=84.3 out of 100 05SP: Mean=88.1 out of 100</p> <p>b. Collected Spring 2004 (N=7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04SP: Mean=6.14 (St. Dev.=.57) • 05SP: Mean=5.69 (St. Dev.=1.06) • 04SP: Mean=6.28 (St. Dev.=.75) • 05SP: Mean=6.13 (St. Dev.=1.06) <p>c. Not collected, 2003-2005</p>

APPENDIX A

Summary Statistics Sociology Major Exit Survey¹

(Administered to students in Soc 395 Sociology Integrative Seminar, Spring 2005, N=15)

As a graduating senior, you have almost finished your studies at Calvin College. We congratulate you. Before you leave Calvin, we would like you to fill out this questionnaire to help the Department of Sociology and Social Work assess the effectiveness of the sociology program at accomplishing its stated objectives. Please complete the questions as honestly and carefully as you can.

The information you provide will assist the department in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the current sociology program. Your responses are strictly anonymous and will be treated confidentially. We appreciate your assistance as we evaluate and strive to improve the sociology program at Calvin College.

How well do you understand the basic perspectives, theories and concepts of sociology?

1. There are several major theoretical perspectives in sociology. Please circle the response that best describes your understanding of the theoretical perspectives listed below. Circling a 7 means that you have very good understanding of the perspective and circling a 1 means that you have limited understanding. If you think your level of understanding falls somewhere between these two extremes, circle a number between 6 and 2. If you are unsure about a perspective or feel that it is not applicable to you, circle N/A (not applicable).

	Mean	Std Dev	Min.	Max.
Functionalist perspective	5.80	1.15	3	7
Conflict perspective	6.07	1.16	3	7
Interactionist perspective (or, symbolic interactionist perspective)	5.40	1.24	3	7
Theory Composite Score	5.76	1.13	3.00	7.00

¹ The instructions and survey instrument are based upon the Survey of Graduating Seniors developed and implemented by R. Beger, J. Carrigan, and M. Cassidy in the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

2. The sociology program introduces students to a variety of substantive areas. Listed below are some of the most important. Please evaluate the level of your sociological understanding in each of these areas. (1=limited understanding to 7=very good understanding)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
culture	6.60	.74	5	7
socialization	6.40	.74	5	7
deviance	6.00	1.25	3	7
organizations	5.60	1.06	3	6
stratification	6.00	1.31	3	7
social class	6.67	.82	4	7
race and ethnicity	6.67	.72	5	7
gender	6.67	.62	5	7
family	5.86	1.35	2	7
religion	5.93	1.38	3	7
education	5.64	1.28	3	7
politics	5.07	1.48	2	7
economy	5.07	1.73	1	7
population	5.50	1.70	1	7
urbanization	6.14	1.03	4	7
social movements	5.33	1.35	2	7
Concept Composite Score	5.95	.92	4.13	6.81

How well do you understand the history of sociology as a discipline?

3. If you were asked to take a pop quiz today about various aspects of the development of sociology as a discipline, how confident would you be in your answers? Listed below are areas that might be included on such a pop quiz. Please circle the response that best characterizes your ability to respond with at least moderate confidence of a correct answer in the following areas. (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
approximate date when sociology began	3.93	1.39	2	6
social conditions at time of sociology's origin	4.33	1.45	2	7
three or more pioneers of sociology	6.33	1.18	3	7
chronology of sociological theories	4.53	1.19	3	7
dominant areas of sociological study today	5.73	.96	3	7
History Composite Score	4.97	.93	2.60	6.40

How well can you integrate a Reformed Christian perspective with the knowledge, skills and values of sociology?

4. Calvin College is a college with a unique theological heritage. Evaluate how strong you think your ability is to integrate a Reformed Christian perspective with the following substantive areas in sociology. (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
culture	6.36	1.08	4	7
social structure	6.14	1.03	4	7
social inequality	6.43	1.09	4	7
social change	6.14	1.17	4	7
research methods	5.57	1.40	3	7
theory	5.36	1.50	2	7
Integration Composite Score	6.00	1.08	3.67	7.00

We also are interested in your understanding of issues of human diversity, inequality, social justice, and reconciliation as informed by sociology.

5. If an acquaintance, friend, or relative asked you to provide a sociological explanation for each of the following phenomena, how strong is your ability to do so? (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
stratification?	5.67	1.35	3	7
ethnocentrism?	5.73	1.39	3	7
racism?	6.33	.82	5	7
sexism?	6.07	1.10	4	7
poverty?	6.33	.72	5	7
social justice?	6.47	.83	4	7
reconciliation?	5.80	.94	4	7
Diversity Composite Score	6.06	.84	4.29	7.00

Next, we would like you to evaluate your ability to carry out social science research. How confident are you in your ability to use basic empirical research skills?

6. Picture yourself working at an agency. Your employer asks you to design and conduct a research project from start to finish. (Assume your employer will provide you access to needed resources such as research methods books and data analysis manuals and software.) Please circle the response that best describes your ability to carry out each of the following aspects of the research process. (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
identify ethical issues involved in social science research?	6.13	.83	5	7
conduct a literature review?	6.00	1.31	3	7
state testable hypotheses?	5.93	1.39	3	7
decide upon an appropriate research method?	5.60	1.35	3	7
draw a sample from a larger population?	6.07	.80	4	7
collect valid and reliable data?	5.93	1.10	4	7
analyze data using statistical software (such as SPSS)?	5.40	1.96	1	7
interpret the results of your study?	5.20	1.70	1	7
relate the results of your study to broader sociological theories?	5.60	1.35	3	7
write a report on the results of your study?	5.80	1.15	3	7
Research Composite Score	5.77	1.06	3.40	7.00

In addition to the skills of analysis, we want you to evaluate how well the sociology program helped you use writing and other communication skills to present sociological knowledge to diverse audiences.

7. For each of the following communication techniques, please evaluate how strong your ability is to convey sociological knowledge accurately and understandably? (1=limited ability to 7=strong ability)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
write professional papers	5.60	1.18	2	7
communicate professionally using memos, letters, or other short reports	5.80	1.21	3	7
make oral presentations	5.67	1.40	3	7
Communication Composite Score	5.69	1.06	3.00	7.00

8. You were required to take several courses in the sociology major. Please evaluate how much each of the required courses listed below contributed to your overall development as a sociology major. (1=limited contribution to 7=strong strong contribution)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Sociological Principles and Perspectives (151)	6.00	1.81	1	7
Statistics and Research Design (255)	5.67	1.05	4	7
Sociological Theory (318)	4.86	1.61	1	7
Social Research (320)	5.40	1.35	3	7
Sociology Integrative Seminar (395)	5.93	1.16	4	7

Seven learning objectives guide the sociology program at Calvin College. The objectives define specific types of knowledge and skills that students in the program should be able to demonstrate by the time they graduate. We are interested in your opinions of how effective the department has been at achieving its program objectives.

9. For each statement, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree. Circling a 7 indicates that you strongly agree with the statement, while circling a 1 indicates that you strongly disagree. If your level of agreement lies somewhere between these extremes, circle a number between 6 and 2.

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
a. I understand basic perspectives, theories and concepts of sociology.	6.20	1.08	4	7
b. I understand the history of sociology as a discipline.	5.00	1.13	3	7
c. I am able to integrate a Reformed Christian perspective with the knowledge, skills, and values of sociology.	6.20	1.21	3	7
d. I understand conceptions of social justice and reconciliation as they relate to local and global settings.	6.33	1.05	3	7
e. I possess a critical awareness of perspectives on and issues relating to human diversity.	6.40	.83	4	7
f. I am able to use basic computing and statistical skills, as well as evaluate research studies.	5.73	1.28	3	7
g. I am able to convey sociological knowledge to diverse audiences through writing and other forms of communication.	6.13	1.06	3	7

Finally, we would like to ask a few questions about you to help us interpret the results in a meaningful way. Again, your responses are strictly anonymous.

10. What is your sex? 86.7% Female
13.3% Male
11. What is your country of citizenship? 93.3% U.S.
6.7% Canada
12. Is sociology your major? 100% Yes
- a. Other major(s): 13.3% Spanish

6.7% Political Science
6.7% Psychology
6.7% Social Work
66.7% None reported

b. Minor(s):

20.0% Social Work
13.3% Gender Studies
13.3% Third World Development Studies
6.7% Business
6.7% Dance
6.7% Linguistics
6.7% Missions
6.7% Psychology
6.7% Missions
20.0% None reported

12. What year did you begin your studies at Calvin College?
71.4% 2001
21.4% 2002
7.1% 2003
13. Did you transfer to Calvin from another college/university?
66.7% No
33.3% Yes
14. When did you declare a sociology major?
13.3% 1st yr
66.7% 2nd yr
20.0% 3rd yr
15. What is your cumulative GPA?
Mean=3.27 (Std. Dev.=.41)

In your own words, please comment on what you consider to be the strengths and/or weaknesses of the sociology major program at Calvin College?

Strengths identified by students:

Professors

- my experience w/ the Sociology faculty has also been really great
- teachers are wonderful & inspiring
- professors, their knowledge and passion for the discipline
- professors
- passion of the profs to live out what they teach
- availability [of professors] to students—esp. Dr. Dougherty & Dr. Mulder
- relationship between profs & students
- Christian faith of profs

Curriculum

- choice of electives is absolutely wonderful
- the variety of classes available
- emphasis on diversity
- Calvin has a really good sociology program, especially in the area of social research

Weaknesses identified by students:

Sociological Theory Course

- Soc. Theory class. It isn't engaging, its [sic] a heavy class load, and would be better if it wasn't a night class
- it is difficult to make Soc. Theory exciting

Post-graduate Guidance

- help people early on w/ career planning, internships, thinking about grad school, etc.—NO ONE is doing this till it's pretty much too late—advising profs should at least be starting this process much earlier!!
- talk more about future options for soc. majors

Perception of Major

- a lot of people think that soc. is an easy major
- students in sociology in general don't see it as a very academic discipline
- more awareness on campus of the difference between sociology and social work

Curricular and Other Issues

- stats & research classes were too full
- classes offered are limited
- no common area to mingle w/ other students and/or profs
- [Soc 395 was] a repeat of 320 w/ a little Christian perspective thrown in
- wished there was more diversity in the class[Soc 395?] in terms of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic background

Appendix B
Soc 395 Sociology Integrative Seminar
Instructions and Evaluation Criteria for Reflection Papers*
Calvin College, Spring 2005

Instructions

Students in the Sociology Integrative Seminar will write three reflection papers to answer summative questions on central course themes. Reflection papers serve as integrative essays that push students to articulate connections between a Reformed Christian worldview and sociological analysis, as informed by the major readings selected for class consideration. Specific question(s) for each paper are listed below.

Reflection Paper 1: What relevance does a reformational worldview have for sociological inquiry?

Reflection Paper 2: How do popular beliefs about U.S. society impact understandings of human diversity and shape intergroup relations in contemporary society? What significance does a reformational worldview have for understanding the challenges of human diversity past and present?

Reflection Paper 3: From a Reformed Christian perspective, what is social justice and what responsibility do Christian sociologists have for promoting it?

Format

The reflection paper should be written as a coherent essay. An introduction of one to two paragraphs should describe the topic and narrow to a concise thesis statement which answers the central question for the assignment. The main body of the paper must substantiate and support the thesis statement using analysis, analogy, and allusion to pertinent readings. To end, the paper should offer a conclusion that restates the thesis and summarizes major supporting points.

Formatting for reflection papers must include:

- Title page, with paper title, student's name, course number, and date of submission
- Double-spaced text
- Page numbers beginning with one on first page of text
- Proper in-text citations for material borrowed from external sources (e.g., "Wolters 1985" in parentheses)
- References

A suggested length for reflection papers is three to five pages.

Reflection papers are worth 20 points each. Descriptions of evaluation criteria are provided on the next page. The due dates for these papers are February 25, March 23 and April 22. Late papers will receive a penalty of four points per day.

* These instructions and evaluation criteria come largely from Paul Moes, Ken Bussema, and Dirk Eigenbrood, "The Use of Essay Writing as an Assessment of Personal, Affective, and Cognitive Growth in College Students," *Research on Christian Higher Education* 6:49-73.

**Soc 395 Reflection Paper Evaluation Criteria
Calvin College, Spring 2005**

Evaluation Criteria		1	2	3	4	5
Logic of Argument						Score _____
no clear thesis statement; reasons in terms of concrete cause and effect, true/false manner (dualism); simplistic arguments with little support or cohesion		weak or unclear thesis statement; recognizes multiple positions and perspectives, but not sure how they fit together ("it all depends"); ambiguous organization			clear thesis statement that insightfully answers main question; argument that is explicit, analytical, systematic, critical (perspectival), and comprehensive	
Use of Biblical Themes (creation, fall, redemption)						Score _____
simplistic, naïve application of biblical concepts; no acknowledgement of cohesive, interrelated themes in scripture		partial recognition and understanding of the interrelated themes of scripture; emphasizes one aspect (e.g., Creation or salvation) over others			clearly articulates importance of creational norms, the reality of sin and a call to reclaim/reform/redeem	
Use of Historical/Structural Analysis						Score _____
no mention or acknowledgement of historical development or impact of societal structures; concepts of worldview, diversity, and justice discussed exclusively in terms of individual, personal experience and/or responsibility		mentions historical development and/or societal structures, but focus is on personal, immediate or situational circumstances or arrangements			explicitly states that issues often reflect or have an historical context, and that societal or cultural structures contribute to shared understandings as well as individual and societal problems	
Contextualization of Reformed Christianity						Score _____
no mention of the distinctive elements of Reformed Christianity or a reformational worldview		presents Reformed Christianity in the context of historical Christianity but applications to worldview, diversity, and justice are superficial or inconsistent			thoroughly integrates Reformed Christianity to analysis of worldview, diversity, and justice; presents Reformed Christianity in a way that compares and contrasts it to other Christian faiths and religious traditions	