CAREER HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This career handbook is designed to provide sociology majors, sociology minors, and prospective students in sociology an overview of the skills they will obtain with a sociology major (or minor), and what kinds of jobs these skills can apply to. As such, this handbook is designed to act as a starting point for students to begin thinking about their future careers, and how their education in sociology can be applied in the job market.

This handbook does not provide an exhaustive list of career options. There are numerous additional careers that students can obtain with a major (or minor) in sociology. The goal of this handbook is to introduce students to the kinds of careers that sociology can open the door to, and provide students with a starting point for thinking about their future careers. The list of resources provided at the end of this handbook directs students to some additional resources in which useful information about careers can be obtained. In particular, the BSU Career Center is a useful resource that can provide students with personalized career coaching and exploration.

This handbook is intended for students who plan to pursue a career with their undergraduate degree. There are numerous additional career options available for students who wish to pursue graduate education. Students interested in continuing their education in graduate school (either within sociology or in another field) are encouraged to speak to their advisor to gain more insight into the graduate school application process and what opportunities can be achieved with a graduate degree.
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TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Below is a listing of transferable skills that can be obtained through courses within the sociology department. Each course offers unique transferable skills, and transferable skills from each sociology course can be found in the course syllabus. These transferable skills are skills that translate into skills required by employers. Thus, knowing the transferable skills that are learned in sociology classes can equip students to inform employers about the skills they have as a sociology major (or minor), as well as how/why these skills make them a qualified candidate for a particular job position.

- Use evidence-based arguments
- Think abstractly
- Write effectively
- Formulate empirically testable questions
- Understand and use statistics
- Comprehend group dynamics and processes
- Possess analytical skills
- Situate issues within a larger macro perspective
- Make hard decisions
- Think critically
- Possess problem-solving skills
- Recognize the value in a variety of arguments
- Celebrate diversity
- Value civic engagement
- Interpret data
- Use scientific data to make decisions (apply research knowledge)
- See beyond the obvious
- Assess the quality of information
- Conduct research
- Read scientific reports and journal articles
- Possess effective oral communication skills
EMPHASES IN SOCIOLOGY

The sociology department has identified distinct emphases within the curriculum. These emphases are designed to provide students with an idea of how sociology courses may be packaged together to provide particular concentrations, or expertise, in specific areas of interest. These emphases are not required to complete a major or minor in sociology, and students are able to select any elective courses they desire to complete their degrees. However, these emphases may be particularly useful in working towards a career, as they may (a) enable students to develop areas of expertise that are particularly marketable to employers, (b) allow students to strengthen their transferable skills in specific areas, and (c) provide a clearer link to potential career opportunities.

As such, these emphases are utilized in this handbook to demonstrate the potential career opportunities that may be linked to these distinct emphases. Students are encourage to think about courses that they have enjoyed, topical areas that they are interested in within sociology, and issues they are passionate about as a way of examining how these interests and passions may be (a) developed within particular emphases in sociology and (b) ultimately translated into future careers.

There are currently four emphases within the sociology curriculum: Diversity and Social Interaction, Health and Populations, Organizations and Institutions, and Social Action and Social Policy. Descriptions of each emphasis and potential career opportunities that each emphasis may lead to can be found on the next few pages.
Diversity and Social Interaction

This emphasis focuses on issues related to diversity and social interaction. As such, this emphasis focuses extensively on social inequality, and the social/structural barriers that help to reinforce and perpetuate this inequality. Particular focus is placed on diversity associated with race/ethnicity and gender. Courses within this emphasis also cover sociological perspectives on individuals, with particular emphasis placed on how social factors influence individual behavior.

Courses in this Emphasis:

- SOC 221  Race and Ethnic Relations
- SOC 227  Spirituality, Self, and Society
- SOC 235  Sociology of Gender
- SOC 260  Social Interaction
- SOC 312  Leisure
- SOC 320  Social Inequality
- SOC 333  Sociology of Media
- SOC 343  Deviance
- SOC 421  Racial and Cultural Minorities
- SOC 434  Sociology of Human Sexuality

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields that deal with diverse groups of people. Courses within this emphasis will be especially beneficial for dealing with diverse groups on a more applied, individualized level. Students who are interested in working with diverse groups, perhaps on a more “hands on” basis, may want to consider this emphasis.
Health and Populations

This emphasis focuses on issues related to health and populations. As such, this emphasis focuses extensively on issues related to health both domestically and internationally, with a particular focus on how social structures influence health outcomes and how sociodemographic characteristics are linked to variations in health outcomes. This emphasis also provides students with experience in demography (the scientific study of populations), which focuses on understanding and analyzing changes, problems, and other issues related to human populations (both domestically and internationally).

Courses in this Emphasis:

SOC 328   Globalization
SOC 341   Health and Illness
SOC 355   Environmental Sociology
SOC 431   Aging and the Life Course
SOC 433   Sociology of Mental Health
SOC 434   Sociology of Human Sexuality
SOC 470   Population and Society

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields related to health. This is a career field that has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. The demographic perspective also offered within this emphasis further compliments careers in health-related areas. In addition, having a background in demography provides students with data analysis skills that can be tied to jobs related to research work, as well as careers focused on tackling global problems and issues.
Organizations and Institutions

This emphasis focuses on issues related to organizations and social institutions. In particular, many of the main institutions in society are explored in-depth within courses in this emphasis, focusing on things such as historical and contemporary perspectives on each institution, ways in which social factors help to shape each institution, and the role that each institution plays within society.

Courses in this Emphasis:

SOC 224  Family and Society
SOC 329  Work and Society
SOC 333  Sociology of Media
SOC 424  Family
SOC 425  Sociology of Law
SOC 427  Sociology of Religion
SOC 450  Sociology of Education

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields that are focused on organizational design, implementation, and evaluation. Courses within this emphasis will also be beneficial for students who are interested in working in labor or employee relations positions, as having a strong background in organizations and institutions will provide the background needed to succeed in these positions.
Social Action and Social Policy

This emphasis focuses on issues related to social action and social policy. Courses within this emphasis provide students with knowledge on social problems and issues both domestically and internationally. Particular emphasis is placed on the ways in which such problems and issues result in social inequality. In addition, courses within this emphasis will also consider ways in which social policies may help to alleviate these problems. As such, this emphasis provides students with some of the tools needed to work towards social change.

Courses in this Emphasis:

SOC 242  Social Problems  
SOC 320  Social Inequality  
SOC 328  Globalization  
SOC 343  Deviance  
SOC 355  Environmental Sociology  
SOC 441  Social Change  
SOC 422  Analysis and Social Inequality  
SOC 472  Urban Dynamics and Problems

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields related to social change and social policy. The knowledge gained from this emphasis is applicable to careers that involve active engagement with individuals and communities that need assistance, as well as careers that involve more passive engagement through research and analysis to work towards policy changes. Students who are passionate about particular causes, and working towards achieving those causes, may want to consider this emphasis.
CAREERS IN SOCIOLOGY

The career possibilities that students can obtain with a major (or minor) in sociology are numerous. They are so numerous, in fact, that it is not possible to provide a complete listing of careers here. Instead, what follows on the next few pages is a list of possible career options. These career options are organized by the particular emphases in the sociology curriculum to demonstrate how particular coursework may help lay the foundation for a future career. In addition, connections are made between some of the desired skills that employers are looking for within each career field and the transferable skills that students obtain in the sociology department. As such, students should get a sense of how work in sociology prepares them for these careers. The link between career skills and transferable skills also provides students with a starting point for thinking about how they can market themselves to potential employers and communicate to employers how and why they are qualified for these positions.
Diversity and Social Interaction

Possible Careers include Human Resources Management (e.g., Affirmative Action Coordinator, Equal Employment Opportunity Representative, Human Resources Coordinator)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Experience with diversity and affirmative action programs
- Knowledge of state and federal employment laws
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to analyze facts
- Ability in establishing policies and procedures to evaluate program effectiveness

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills, including a focus on diversity
- Ability to analyze and interpret data
- Ability to conduct research and interpret data
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions

Other Possible Careers include work in Community and Social Services (e.g., Case Worker, Family Counselor, Youth Specialist, Community Services Specialist)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Knowledge of vulnerabilities due to various forms of disadvantage (depending on specialty)
- Experience working in services related to diverse groups (depending on specialty area)
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability and desire to work with diverse groups

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills, including a focus on diversity
- Celebrate diversity
- Experience working on applied projects in diverse settings
**Other Possible Careers include work in Market Research**  
* (e.g., Marketing Assistant, Market Research Analyst, Customer Insights Researcher)  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Required for Careers:</th>
<th>Skills Obtained in Sociology:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Problem-solving and decision-making skills</td>
<td>• Problem-solving skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Experience conducting research</td>
<td>• Writing and communication skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally</td>
<td>• Ability to understand and use statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong analytical thinking</td>
<td>• Ability to make hard decisions and think critically</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of statistics</td>
<td>• Ability to conduct research and interpret data</td>
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Health and Populations

*Possible Careers include work in Case Management and Counseling (Suicide Prevention, Substance Abuse Counselor, Rehabilitation Coordinator, Prevention Educator)*

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<tr>
<th>Skills Required for Careers:</th>
<th>Skills Obtained in Sociology:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Compassion for people</td>
<td>• Celebrate diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to develop and implement programs</td>
<td>• Value civic engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to assess effectiveness of programs</td>
<td>• Writing and communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to analyze facts</td>
<td>• Ability to read scientific reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong communication skills</td>
<td>• Ability to analyze and interpret data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to understand materials and communicate information to clients</td>
<td>• Ability to use scientific data to make decisions</td>
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**Other Possible Careers include work in Research**

*(e.g., Population Analyst, Research Specialist, Program Analyst)*

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<td>• Experience conducting research</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strong analytical thinking</td>
<td>• Ability to make hard decisions and think critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of statistics</td>
<td>• Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to work with diverse groups</td>
<td>• Ability to conduct research and interpret data</td>
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Other Possible Careers include work in Public Health (e.g., Public Health Supervisor, Community Health Advocate, Public Health Specialist)

Skills Required for Careers:
- Problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Identify barriers to health services and implement strategies to reduce barriers
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to understand and communicate scientific data
- Ability to make independent decisions
- Ability to work with diverse groups

Skills Obtained in Sociology:
- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to situate issues within a larger macro perspective
- Ability to read scientific reports
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically
- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Ability to use evidence-based arguments
Organizations and Institutions

Possible Careers include work in Labor Relations (Labor Relations Specialist, Labor Force Analyst, Employee Relations Representative)

Skills Required for Careers:
- Excellent problem-solving skills and ability to think analytically
- Knowledge of state and federal employment laws
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to use data to make informed decisions
- Experience with statistics

Skills Obtained in Sociology:
- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills
- Possess problem-solving and analytical skills
- Ability to understand and use statistics
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions

Other Possible Careers include work in Research (e.g., Data Analyst, Planning Analyst, Program Evaluator)

Skills Required for Careers:
- Problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Experience conducting research
- Identifying policy options from research
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Strong analytical thinking
- Knowledge of statistics

Skills Obtained in Sociology:
- Problem-solving skills
- Writing and communication skills
- Ability to understand and use statistics
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically
- Ability to use evidence-based arguments
- Ability to conduct research and interpret data
# Social Action and Social Policy

_Possible Careers include work in Counseling, Coordination, and Victim Services_ (Community Outreach Educator, Substance Abuse Counselor, Crime Victim Liaison, Victim Services Specialist)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Required for Careers:</th>
<th>Skills Obtained in Sociology:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to understand and interpret scientific data</td>
<td>• Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to effectively communicate with diverse populations</td>
<td>• Writing and communication skills, including a focus on diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of diverse groups (as well as laws/policies relevant to these groups)</td>
<td>• Ability to analyze and interpret data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to analyze information and use information to inform development of programs</td>
<td>• Ability to read scientific reports</td>
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<td>• Ability to use scientific data to make decisions</td>
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*Other Possible Careers include work in Government and Public Employment (e.g., Human Rights Officer, Customs Inspector, Intake Coordinator)*

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<tr>
<th>Skills Required for Careers:</th>
<th>Skills Obtained in Sociology:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of legal and basic human rights</td>
<td>• Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experience working with diverse groups</td>
<td>• Writing and communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally</td>
<td>• Ability to use scientific data to make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to apply facts to make informed decisions</td>
<td>• Ability to situate issues within a larger macro perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to understand structure, and how this knowledge can be used to develop strategies for change</td>
<td>• Ability to make hard decisions and think critically</td>
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</table>
**Other Possible Careers include work in Research**
(e.g., Program Evaluator, Policy Analyst, Social Science Analyst)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Required for Careers:</th>
<th>Skills Obtained in Sociology:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of research trends and findings related to specific policy issues</td>
<td>• Problem-solving skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally</td>
<td>• Ability to think analytically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to compile and analyze data</td>
<td>• Writing and communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong analytical thinking and problem-solving skills</td>
<td>• Ability to make hard decisions and think critically</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to translate complex messages into understandable messages</td>
<td>• Ability to situate issues within a larger macro perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to make independent decisions</td>
<td>• Ability to read scientific reports and use this information to make evidence-based decisions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ability to conduct research and interpret data</td>
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Other Resources for Information about Careers in Sociology

- Careers in Sociology: Information from the American Sociological Association
  - www.asanet.org/career-center/careers-sociology
  - Available as an electronic resource through the BSU library

Additional Career Resources at Ball State University

- SOC 488 – Internship Experience
- Career Center
  - Intern Ready
    - https://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/careercenter/students/internready
  - Career Ready
    - https://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/careercenter/students/careerready
- Undergraduate Faculty Advisor
  - Dr. Richard J. Petts (rjpetts@bsu.edu)
- Upper Division Academic Advisor
  - Katherine Herbert (kjherbert@bsu.edu)

Useful Job Search Websites

- www.idealist.com
- www.socialservice.com
- www.usajobs.gov
- collegegrad.com
- www.careeronestop.org